Testimony Submitted by Commissioner Joe Giulietti
Connecticut Department of Transportation

S.B. 16 – An Act Concerning the Adult Use of Cannabis

Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom, Senator Kssel, Representative Rebimbas, and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony on Governor Lamont’s proposed legislation, S.B. 16, An Act Concerning the Adult Use of Cannabis.

The Connecticut Department of Transportation (DOT) is dedicated to providing a safe and efficient transportation system for all users. DOT also serves as Connecticut’s federally-designated Highway Safety Office (HSO), an important role that provides for a direct partnership with the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration. In this role as the state’s HSO, our main objective is to prevent or reduce motor vehicle related injuries and fatalities on Connecticut’s roadways. We believe that the robust traffic safety provisions in S.B. 16 advance this mission, and we are in strong support.

Through outreach, education, and enforcement, the HSO strives to address risky behavior through a proven model of using high visibility enforcement coupled with strong media messaging and education. In addressing the issue of “Driving under the influence” (DUI or Impaired Driving), law enforcement needs to be highly trained and have the most reliable and accurate devices for testing and evaluation. To help address impairment on the state’s roadways and increase safety for the public, Connecticut was accepted in 2011 into the Drug Evaluation and Classification Program (DECP) by the International Association of Chiefs of Police and began training Connecticut law enforcement in recognizing signs of alcohol and/or drug impairment and any underlying medical issues, in motor vehicle operators.

The HSO continues to be actively involved in training law enforcement officers in all areas of impaired driving enforcement, including: Standardized Field Sobriety Testing (SFST), Advanced Roadside Impaired Driving Enforcement (ARIDE), and the rigorous Drug Recognition Expert (DRE) certification. Currently the State of Connecticut has 64 certified DREs, encompassing 35 different law enforcement agencies. Since 2013, over 900 law enforcement officers in Connecticut have completed ARIDE certification. By increasing the offering of these training opportunities, providing the necessary tools to law enforcement, and expanding the number of ARIDE-trained law enforcement officers and DREs in the state, the HSO believes we can promote increased traffic safety measures for the traveling public.

Thank you again for the opportunity to offer testimony in support of the significant traffic safety provisions included in S.B. 16. For further information or questions about the work of the DOT in advancing safety on the roadways or the impaired driving enforcement programs supported by the HSO, please contact Alicia Leite (Alicia.leite@ct.gov) or Pam Sucato (pamela.sucato@ct.gov) at the Department of Transportation, (860) 594-3015.