



January 27, 2021

To the Co-Chairs, Ranking Members, and Members of the Transportation Committee:

Thank you all for inviting our public testimony today for HB 5429. My name is Gannon Long, of Hartford; here today as Policy & Public Affairs Director for Operation Fuel. We are the nation's oldest fuel bank, providing utility and water assistance to over 6000 families across CT last year.

First, if anyone listening is looking for help paying your utility and water bills, please reach out to us at [www.operationfuel.org/gethelp](http://www.operationfuel.org/gethelp). To the legislators here today, please reach out if your constituents have questions or are looking for resources.

We thank the Department of Transportation for their leadership in both Governor's Council on Climate Change and this important pedestrian safety advocacy, and for working with the committee to advance these critical policies. Sen. Cassano, congratulations on your new chairmanship, we wish you well. And Rep. Lemar, thank you for your perseverance and advocacy of Vision Zero and Complete Streets planning over the years.

The main reason we are here today is to voice support for components of HB 5429, *An Act Concerning Pedestrian Safety, Vision Zero Council, Speed Limits In Municipalities, Fines And Charges For Certain Violations, The Greenways Commemorative Account And Maintenance Work Zone And School Zone Safety Enforcement*.

Operation Fuel is primarily an energy and water affordability organization. However, transportation inequality imposes a tremendous cost and opportunity burden on our clients, and low- and moderate-income (LMI) residents across our state. Unlike in energy and water, there are few similar support programs (like Operation Fuel) for folks facing transportation barriers.

Transportation costs can be highly variable, typically second only to rent as % of the household budget. Lack of affordable, accessible, safe transportation options is a systemic barrier that keeps our clients and many CT residents from accessing necessary services. Communities across our state that have low rates of car ownership are less likely to have appropriate pedestrian safety infrastructure, and more likely to experience traffic violence.

[HB 5429](#) has several important components to promote neighborhood safety and active transportation. For one, drivers should stop for pedestrians trying to cross the street. Asking people walking to step into traffic before getting the right of way doesn't work, and is incredibly scary. CT should update this statute, and adopt DOT's legislation to increase visibility at midblock crosswalks.

Most states have protections for cyclists against “dooring,” and we encourage CT to catch up to those enforcement standards. Regarding local control of speed limits: we know that collisions at higher speeds are more likely to cause injury and death; so lowering car speeds is important. We encourage efforts to simplify this process and to empower local policymakers, who best understand their neighborhoods and traffic.

Operation Fuel is especially keen to support the Greenways fund. Walking, biking and other forms of active transportation are not just for recreation. Green trails are healthy and safe paths for people to use when getting to school and work. Investing in greenways and urban forests are [key recommendations from the Governor’s Council on Climate Change \(on which Operation Fuel’s Executive Director served\)](#). Research from the Yale Center on Climate Change and Health also [supports this concept](#), which would advance our state’s educational, economic, public health, and climate change goals.

In CT’s 4 largest cities, more than 25% of households don’t own a car. We are discussing diverse communities – thinking broadly about people who might be white, Black, brown, multi-racial; differently-abled; earners of fixed income like Social Security vs variable income like a minimum wage job with inconsistent hours; living on busy, quiet, littered, clean, green, shady, sunny, dirty, and all kinds of different streets. Is it safe to walk from where you live to somewhere close by? Shouldn’t it be for all of us?

Transportation burden and opportunity cost is compounded by other challenges facing low-income residents of our state, including Operation Fuel clients. We support your efforts to shift us to a more equitable, safe, and clean transportation system.

Thank you for raising and supporting HB5429, and for your thoughtful service to our state.

[Raised H.B. No. 5429](#)  
Session Year 2021

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**AN ACT CONCERNING PEDESTRIAN SAFETY, VISION ZERO COUNCIL, SPEED LIMITS IN MUNICIPALITIES, FINES AND CHARGES FOR CERTAIN VIOLATIONS, THE GREENWAYS COMMEMORATIVE ACCOUNT AND MAINTENANCE WORK ZONE AND SCHOOL ZONE SAFETY ENFORCEMENT.**

To (1) require motorists to grant the right-of-way to pedestrians who affirmatively indicate their intention to cross the road in a crosswalk; (2) increase the fine for operating a motor vehicle while using a hand-held mobile telephone or electronic device; (3) increase the additional fee provided to municipalities for certain traffic violations; (4) establish a fine for opening the door of a motor vehicle in a way that impedes the travel of a pedestrian or a person riding a bicycle; (5) allow local traffic authorities to establish speed limits and pedestrian safety zones; (6) establish the greenways commemorative account; (7) allow the use of automated traffic enforcement safety devices within maintenance work zones; and (8) establish a pilot program to use automated traffic enforcement safety devices in school zones.

2021 GC3 Near term actions <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DEEP/climatechange/GC3/GC3-Executive-and-Non-State-Agency-Actions.pdf>

2020 GC3 Report

[https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DEEP/climatechange/GC3/GC3\\_Phase1\\_Report\\_Jan2021.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DEEP/climatechange/GC3/GC3_Phase1_Report_Jan2021.pdf)

P. 39 (Transportation) “20. a. Implement TOD projects and support walkable, mixed-use, and sustainable urban and suburban development in areas served by transit. b. Encourage, incentivize, and support alternative modes and active transportation that reduce single-occupant vehicle driving.”