Testimony Supporting H.B. 5429 and S.B. 261
National Safety Council
Committee on Transportation
January 27, 2021

Chair Lemar, Vice Chair Cassano, Vice Chair Simms, Ranking Member Carney, Ranking Member Sommers and esteemed members of the Committee on Transportation, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support **of H.B. 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** and **S.B. 261: An Act Concerning Recommendations By The Department Of Motor Vehicles.**

The National Safety Council (NSC) is America's leading nonprofit safety advocate and has been for over 100 years. As a mission-based organization, we work to eliminate the leading causes of preventable death and injury, focusing our efforts on the workplace, roadway and impairment. We create a culture of safety to keep people safer in the workplace and beyond so they can live their fullest lives. NSC has more than 15,000 member companies represent employees at more than 50,000 U.S. worksites, including nearly 500 in Connecticut.

H.B. 5429

H.B. 5429 will make important safety upgrades to Connecticut's roads, including providing municipalities the authority to set safe local speed limits, allowing for the use of automated enforcement in work zones and creating a pilot a program allowing municipalities to utilize automated enforcement in school zones. These policies have the potential to greatly improve the safety of all roadway users, especially those who use our roadways for walking, biking and other modes of non-vehicle transportation.

In 2019, 36,096 people died in motor vehicle-related crashes, with 249 lives lost in Connecticut.[1] Preliminary estimates by NSC show there likely will be a significant increase in motor vehicle-related fatalities in 2020 despite less traffic.[2] This data show more needs to be done to improve the safety of our roads for all road users, incorporating education with legislation and targeted enforcement.

As the Committee considers H.B. 5429, which will create new fine structures for automated enforcement violators and increase fines for distracted driving infractions, NSC encourages you to consider the addition of a training requirement as a tool to help improve bad driving behavior, especially for those individuals who are repeat offenders. The most common punishments for repeat offenders today are increasing fines, point increases and ultimately suspending a license. However, the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators (AAMVA)

[1] https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813060
[2] https://injuryfacts.nsc.org/motor-vehicle/overview/preliminary-monthly-estimates/

estimates that 75% of people who have a suspended license continue to drive.[3] Additionally, those without a valid license were found to be involved with nearly 20% of traffic fatalities, six times the rate of other drivers.[4] Data prove that we cannot change dangerous driving habits by simply escalating the responses.

The best means by which to address repeat traffic offenders and improve roadway safety is through intervention and education. This is why NSC fully encourages the Committee to require mandatory driver training for repeat offenders of traffic safety laws, including those receiving infractions for automated enforcement and distracted driving. This policy will enhance roadway safety by ensuring the worst traffic offenders receive education to improve driving habits and attitudes.

H.B. 5429 includes provisions to improve safety for vulnerable road users like pedestrians and cyclists. Vulnerable road user fatalities have been increasing in the U.S. at an alarming rate. Preliminary data from the Governor's Highway Safety Association estimates 6,590 pedestrian fatalities in 2019, a 5% increase from 2018 and the highest number since 1988.[5] If the U.S. is able to eliminate crash fatalities between motor vehicles and vulnerable road users, thousands of lives could be saved each year.[6]

Speed limits or speed mitigation policies benefit all vulnerable road users such as pedestrians, cyclists, people with disabilities, children and more. Even modest speed reductions could prevent or mitigate the effects of many motor vehicle crashes.[7] For example, Boston lowered its default speed limit to 25 mph from 30 mph in 2017. As a result, the city saw an 8.5% reduction in the odds of a vehicle exceeding 30 mph, and a 29.3% reduction in the likelihood of a vehicle exceeding 35 mph.[8] Allowing localities to lower speed limits, especially in areas with significant pedestrian traffic, will improve roadway safety. Lower vehicle speeds are a proven and effective countermeasure for reducing injuries and fatalities. Additionally, H.B. 5429 reiterates that pedestrians have the right-of-way, which will also be helpful to prevent these fatalities.

Automated enforcement technologies are another proven life-saving tool. According to a system analysis completed by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), automated enforcement is highly effective in slowing down drivers and saving lives on the roadways.[9] Automated enforcement helps ensure people drive at posted speed limits, which reduces the severity and likelihood of crashes.[10] It monitors speeding and other risky driving

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[3] American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators 2013 Best Practices Guide to Reducing Suspended Drivers: https://www.ncsc.org/~/media/Microsites/Files/Trends%202017/Trends-2017-Final-small.ashx
[4] National Highway Traffic Safety Administration 2014 Report: Driver License Compliance Status in Fatal Crashes: https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/812046
[5] https://www.ghsa.org/resources/Pedestrians20
[6] https://safety.nsc.org/road-to-zero-safety-priority-statements-vulnerable-road-users
[7] W.A. Leaf and D.F. Preusser (1998), Literature Review on Vehicle Travel Speeds and Pedestrian Injuries, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, USDOT
[8] 18 Wen, Cicchino. Lowering the speed limit from 30 to 25 mph in Boston: effects on vehicle speeds. https://www.iihs.org/news/detail/city-drivers-slow-down-for-lower-speed-limit-in-boston
[9] https://www.nhtsa.gov/sites/nhtsa.dot.gov/files/812257_systemanalysisase.pdf
[10] Pennsylvania Department of Transportation Crash Facts & Statistics, 2016: http://www.penndot.gov/TravelInPA/Safety/Documents/2016_CFB_linked.pdf.

behaviors, allowing law enforcement to focus their limited resources on other community priorities. Automated enforcement, deployed using data to show the most dangerous roadways, can help ensure equitable enforcement.

H.B. 5429 will make work zones and school zones safer. Again, speeding can be a leading factor in work zone crash fatalities. We should provide the highest level of workplace safety for work zone employees by ensuring vehicles operating around them are driving at posted lower speeds. Ensuring proper speed adherence in these high risk areas through automated enforcement can save lives.

One successful example of automated enforcement in work zones improving safety is Maryland's *SafeZones* Automated Speed Enforcement program. Since its inception in 2010, there has been a 90% decrease in the number of vehicles traveling 12 mph or more above the work zone speed limit.[11] It also provides the benefit of eliminating the need for officers to be present in work zones and outside their vehicles handling traffic violations.

S.B. 261

NSC is supportive of the Department of Motor Vehicle's amendments to the Operator Retraining Program (ORP) as outlined in S.B. 261. These changes would allow for the program to be provided in a class or online (distance learning) and would make the course accessible in challenging times, such as these. NSC is a participant in the ORP and successfully transitioned to online programming quickly after the pandemic hit. Participants in the online program receive the same content as they would in the classroom and are able to access it in a safe location convenient to them. Online courses can be bookmarked, providing the learners with the ability to start and stop the course. Distance learning allows the course to be taught in a consistent manner ensuring all learners receive the same training in the same manner. Online courses provide immediate bilingual options, closed captioning for the hearing impaired, and are secure, ensuring identity verification at registration randomly throughout the course.

Eliminating roadway fatalities cannot be done without massive, near-term gains in highway safety, and we must use every tool at our disposal to save lives, which includes stronger laws around enforcement and education. If you have any questions please contact Tara Leystra at 202-445-3121 or tara.leystra@nsc.org.

[11] Maryland *SafeZones*. The Facts about Maryland's *SafeZones* Program, Summer 2019: https://www.roads.maryland.gov/OC/Maryland_SafeZones_Fact_Sheet_2019_Winter.pdf