

Chairman Lemar, Vice Chairman Cassano and members of the transportation committee, thank you for the opportunity to address you today. My name is Michael Terzigni.

I am from Waterbury CT and I am speaking in support of HOUSE BILL 6569, specifically the portion regarding the requirements of residents to register their vehicles with the CT DMV.

I have been a police officer in Connecticut for 25 years. The majority of my career has been dedicated to traffic safety and the enforcement of our states motor vehicle laws. As with many laws, the motor vehicle statues are full of loopholes and dodges that scofflaws and criminals take advantage of to avoid financial and criminal responsibility. One of those loopholes is allowing residents of CT to avoid registering their cars with the CT DMV. While the current law does mandate that CT residents must register their cars in CT, we in law enforcement often find it difficult to enforce this. The law as it pertains to registration does not clearly define what a "resident" is. Is it a property owner or someone who actually resides here? If you have a CT driver's license does that mean you are a resident? While the answers to these questions may seem simple people are constantly finding ways to exploit gray areas in the law. I urge that when you consider changing the time frames as proposed in the raised bill you also look to close the loopholes that are currently being exploited.

So why is it so important that residents of CT register their vehicles here and not in another state? I can address that wearing two hats. As a resident and taxpayer I don't LIKE to pay the fees and taxes associated with vehicle ownership. I don't know anyone who looks forward to writing that check to the DMV and the tax collector but I know that the streets aren't going to pave themselves, I can't put out every fire myself with a garden hose and the thousands of people that work for the towns and state doing things to make life safer and better for everyone aren't going to work for free. So it's the price I pay for safety, security and convenience. What makes it frustrating is knowing that the person in the car with the Florida registration actually lives next door to me and is enjoying the same safety and luxuries as I do but they didn't have to write that check. Fair is fair.

As a police officer I really don't care about the tax revenue side of vehicle registration. What I do care about is accountability. Operating a vehicle is probably one of the most trusted responsibilities we have as citizens. Every day we are surrounded by 4000 lb hunks of metal whizzing by at 55 mph and the ONLY safety we have is the expectation that the operator of that vehicle is going to do so safely and responsibly. Unfortunately we know that this isn't always the case and everyday people are injured and killed by improperly operated vehicles. When this happens the responsible operators need to be held responsible. Not just financially but also morally and criminally so as to deter similar tragedies and encourage safe driving. Even if the operator is identified and located we find that many people who register their vehicles in other states to avoid taxes and fees also tend to avoid carrying insurance and don't have the ability to cover the damage and injuries they cause leaving our residents on the hook for substantial medical bills and ultimately raising insurance rates for everyone. We also know that criminals are generally lazy and don't like to break the law and a sweat at the same time so they usually use vehicles in the furtherance of their crimes. If we cannot identify these vehicles and locate the owners and operators then it makes it difficult to hold people accountable and apprehend criminals. When investigating an incident or crime involving a vehicle it does no good to know that the registration was issued to someone in San Antonio, Texas when they actually live here in CT. I can go to San Antonio every day and I'll never find the car or the operator because they are right here in our own state all the time.

As a final note I would like the committee to consider additional changes to the registration laws that go beyond the time frame to register vehicles from out of state. Over the last few years law enforcement around the country has seen a dramatic increase in the number of temporary paper and dealer registration plates being used on cars within Connecticut. This increase is the result of more state DMV offices looking to reduce costs by taking advantage of electronic registration systems and allowing end users to download and print plates. This has opened the door to unchecked fraud and I can tell you that repeated investigations into these registrations have shown the vast majority of them are being issued fraudulently or are just blatantly fake. Many unscrupulous people both in and out of CT have been illegally selling these plates to CT motorists and assuring them that they are legal to use when they are not. These registrations are rarely traceable and almost never covered by insurance. Unfortunately current laws in Connecticut are vague regarding the use of these types of registrations, making enforcement difficult. I would urge you to consider changes that would better allow us in law enforcement to do the job you pay us to do.

Thank you for your time today and for your service to the residents of Connecticut.