

# Public Safety and Security Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** HB-6625

AN ACT CONCERNING A RED LIGHT CAMERA PROGRAM IN THE CITY OF

**Title:** WATERBURY.

**Vote Date:** 3/16/2023

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable

**PH Date:** 2/14/2023

**File No.:** 356

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## **SPONSORS OF BILL:**

Public Safety and Security Committee,  
Rep. Geraldo Reyes, 75<sup>th</sup> District.

## **REASONS FOR BILL:**

This legislation grants permission to the city of Waterbury to establish a red-light camera program that would deploy automated traffic enforcement systems at locations with a significant history of vehicle collisions resulting from failure to comply with traffic signals. The local authorities have observed a noteworthy surge of 122% in fatal accidents in the past year, which is much higher than the state's 25% increase during the same period. After conducting research, the officials have pinpointed ten roads with the highest frequency of crashes where they plan to implement the red-light camera technology. By automating traffic enforcement, the police would have more power to enforce traffic safety and hold offenders accountable, with the overarching goal of reducing traffic-related injuries and fatalities.

## **RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:**

[State of Connecticut Judicial Branch, External Affairs Division](#) does not express an opinion on the policies outlined in the bill but raises concerns regarding the possible implementation. It is stated that the bill plans to utilize an automated enforcement process for citation, which by passes law enforcement and the court system. It is further stated that there are concerns about how these records, maintained outside the statewide central citation system, would be accessible for analysis and identification of subsequent offenses mentioned in the bill. It is stated that there exists a potential for disparate outcomes resulting from municipal adjudication systems created in collaboration with the private sector, and how this could impact Connecticut's uniform citation system.

[Freedom of Information Commission, Executive Director, Colleen M. Murphy](#): has concerns regarding the language that limits the disclosure of aggregate information and data for "research purposes" only. It is stated that this language could create an inconsistency with principles of open government in Connecticut that public records be made available to everyone regardless of intent. It is also stated that the proposal lacks clear definition of "research purposes", who can authorize access to that information, and who is able to acquire the data. It is also stated that the bill should be amended to exclude language limiting disclosure or clarifying the definitions previously mentioned to ensure transparency.

#### **NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:**

[AAA, Office of Public and Government Affairs, Managing Director and Manager, Alec Slatky and Tracy Noble](#): support this bill as the implementation of red-light and speed cameras can improve safety outcomes if administered with equity in mind. However, it is stated that poorly implemented camera programs can serve more as a municipal revenue generator than a genuine safety initiative. It is suggested that a warning period should be included, that the camera should capture multiple images to show violations, and that Waterbury should consider crash history when selecting appropriate sites. It is also suggested that municipal officials, not vendor employees, should issue violations. It is stated that while there are many provisions in the bill to protect drivers, additional provisions would help ensure the camera program operates as safely, fairly, and transparently as possible.

[City of Waterbury, Department of Police Services, Chief of Police, Fernando C. Spagnolo](#): supports this bill as the City of Waterbury has experienced a 122.22% increase in fatal crashes, which are largely due to speed, aggressive driving, distracted driving, and a lack of pedestrian awareness. It is stated that despite the City's participation in traffic enforcement campaigns, there has continued to be an increase in traffic accidents. It is further stated that the Police Department in conjunction with the mayor have identified the top 10 roads where crashes occur in the city and are willing to start a pilot program immediately. It is stated that the bill would allow for automatic speed enforcement and is a just and fair system that will help protect the citizens of the State of Connecticut. A national study by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety is cited that demonstrates that automated traffic light enforcement reduced fatal red-light running crashes by 21%.

#### **NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

[City of New Haven, Retired Administrator, Department of Traffic and Parking, Charles Wailonis](#): opposes this bill because the implementation of traffic enforcement safety devices will increase accidents as studies have shown a significant rise in rear-end collisions when drivers panic and brake suddenly at yellow lights. It is stated that such devices only serve as revenue generators for municipalities and their vendors, and that they are rife with scandal and corruption. It is further stated the bill has several problems, including the lack of data analysis or criteria for camera placement, the absence of specific requirements for advance signage, and the potential bias in the appointment of hearing officers.

[Motor Transport Association of Connecticut \(MTAC\), President, John Blair](#): respectfully opposes this bill due to concerns over the implementation of red-light cameras. It is stated that there are concerns related to safety, with evidence showing that drivers may speed up or brake quickly to avoid costly infractions at red-light camera intersections, leading to an increase in accidents and injuries. It is also stated that unfair costs may be imposed on motor carriers, particularly those turning left at intersections where they may be caught by the red-light camera while waiting for oncoming traffic. Further, there is concern of the cost burden placed on rental companies, which may be assessed fines for infractions that occur when their trailers are being used by independent operators.

[American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut \(ACLU-CT\), Policy Counsel, Jess Zaccagnino](#): opposes this bill as the use of red-light and speed cameras for traffic safety poses significant privacy, due process, and racial justice threats. It is stated that these cameras collect license plate data from all drivers, raising serious First and Fourth Amendment concerns. It is also stated that data collected by automatic license plate readers (ALPR) can enable the government to track where someone has gone, where they are going, and who visits certain locations. It is recommended that any proposal to use speed or red-light cameras must come with a prohibition on data-sharing with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Additionally, concerns are stated about the discriminatory placement of these cameras in municipalities where higher concentrations of people of color are disproportionately affected. It is recommended that the proposals outlined be incorporated into the final version of the bill to adequately address racial justice and privacy concerns.

**Reported by: Lukas Houle**

**Date: 3/23/2023**