

Public Safety and Security Committee
JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-232

AN ACT ESTABLISHING A GRANT PROGRAM TO PROVIDE LAW ENFORCEMENT UNITS WITH AUTOMATED NUMBER PLATE RECOGNITION

Title: SYSTEMS.

Vote Date: 3/14/2024

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 2/29/2024

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Sen. Paul Cicarella, 34th District
Rep. Greg S. Howard, 43rd District
Rep. Ben McGorty, 122nd District

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill establishes a grant program within available appropriations to provide grants to law enforcement units to purchase of automatic license plate readers. No later than 10/1/2024 the DESPP shall develop the criteria to be used in selecting among applications for the grant.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

None Expressed

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Carl Fortuna, First Selectman - Town of Old Saybrook: Testified remotely and is in support of this bill. He testified on behalf of the CT Conference of Municipalities (CCM) and as a co-chair of their Public Safety Committee, that some departments have already employed these devices. He also testified that these devices have a variety of benefits and assist with investigations along with enhancing real-time monitoring of vehicle activity. He stated that CT has recently been plagued by a variety of illegal ATV and dirt bike usage and illegal street takeovers and that these unmanned aerial vehicles, in this bill, may enhance law enforcement investigations. CCM recommends that the state fully fund and financially commit to this program.

Howard Handler, Sr. Director – Government Affairs, National Insurance Crime Bureau:

Testified in support of this bill via correspondence. He testified that license plate readers are one tool that have consistently proven to be a valuable crime fighting tool in cases ranging from arson, kidnapping, murder, vehicle theft and more. He also testified that organized criminal rings are increasingly turning to stolen cars to make money, finance their operations and during the commission of other crimes such as robberies, burglary, drive-by shootings and even terrorism.

Mike Muszynski, CT Conference of Municipalities (CCM): Testified via correspondence in support of this bill. He testified that several departments from around the state have already employed these devices. Benefits of these devices vary from identifying vehicles of interest, assisting with investigations to enhance real-time monitoring of vehicle activity, along with improved situational awareness for officers. Continued testimony stated that CT has recently been plagued by the street take over incidents therefore this bill will enhance law enforcements investigations.

Betsy Gara, Executive Director – Connecticut Council of Small Towns (COST): Testified in support of this bill via correspondence. She testified that plate readers are an efficient use of resources at a time when municipalities are struggling to retain personnel in these fields.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Jess Zaccagnino, Policy Counsel – ACLU CT: Testified in opposition of this bill via correspondence. He testified that his organization is committed to ending police violence and racism in policing in all forms. CT must divest from policing and reinvest in programs that build strong and safe communities. He went on to state that policymakers must reduce policing's responsibilities scale and tools to build an equitable future for all people in CT and reinvest those funds into the programs, resources and services that truly create stable, healthy, and safe communities. He testified that there are significant privacy concerns that accompany the use of license plate recognition systems by the police. These readers and the ever-growing databases can enable the government to track where someone has gone, are going, and who visits a certain location, such as churches, mosques, or adult bookstores raising serious 1st and 4th Amendment concerns.

Reported by: Michelle Adams

Date: 3/15/2024