

**Public Safety and Security Committee**  
**JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT**

**Bill No.:** SB-337

AN ACT CONCERNING STREET TAKEOVERS AND THE ILLEGAL USE OF

**Title:** CERTAIN VEHICLES.

**Vote Date:** 3/19/2024

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable

**PH Date:** 3/7/2024

**File No.:**

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**SPONSORS OF BILL:**

Sen. Tony Hwang, 28th Dist.  
Sen. Martin M. Looney, 11th Dist.  
Rep. Michael DiGiovancarlo, 74th Dist.  
Rep. Michael D Quinn, 82nd Dist.  
Rep. Gary A. Turco, 27th Dist.  
Rep. Greg S. Howard, 43rd Dist.  
Sen. Henri Martin, 31st Dist.  
Sen. Jeff Gordon, 35th Dist.  
Sen. Derek Slap, 5th Dist.  
Rep. John-Michael Parker, 101st Dist.  
Sen. Paul Cicarella, 34th Dist.

**REASONS FOR BILL:**

This bill revises provisions regarding forfeiture of certain illegally used vehicles and authorizes municipalities to adopt an ordinance related to street takeovers, establish penalties for driving while a person's license is suspended or revoked due to a violation related to a street takeover, enable municipalities to destroy the seized vehicles after the established timeframe, and establish a grant program to provide funds to municipalities to enforce laws related to street takeovers and the illegal use of certain vehicles.

**RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:**

None Expressed

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

**Andrew Adamczyk:** Testified in support of this bill via correspondence. Andrew testified that participants are knowingly causing disruption, chaos, intimidation and terror and are intentionally interfering with public safety, commerce and transportation. He testified that they should be defined in the law as domestic terrorists and must be treated as terrorists and formally charged with domestic terrorism. The takeover events must be legally defined as acts of terrorism to allow for appropriate response from law enforcement and public safety personnel.

**Anonymous:** Testified via correspondence in support of this bill. Anonymous testified that it is important to keep our streets safe from takeovers and illegal street racing. He referred to an incident 2 years ago on a New Haven Street because of the street racing along with 7 others injured. Harsher repercussion for illegal street racing and takeovers is necessary.

**Justin Elicker, Mayor – City of New Haven:** Testified via correspondence in support of this bill. He stated that it is common knowledge that both issues pose a danger to our citizens that has increased over time. He also supports the proposed amendment that gives the city the option of destroying these seized vehicles, including those with lienholders or claimed by innocent owners if not collected within 30 days of notice. It will relieve local police departments of the burden of storing these items and ensuring that they will no longer endanger motorists and pedestrians. The mayor also supports the amendments relating to the recently created offense of street takeovers, 12-224, and Section 7, allowing for the administration of grants to municipalities to tackle these issues.

**Betsy Gara, Executive Director – COST:** Testified via correspondence in support of this bill. She testified that street takeovers are creating public safety concerns in many municipalities throughout the state and that this bill builds on the efforts to strengthen and protect residents and motorists from the dangers of these takeovers.

**Patricia King, Corporation Counsel – City of New Haven:** Testified via correspondence in support of this bill. She testified that this bill works to improve upon the previous legislation and enhance consequences for those who violate local ordinances and state laws meant to address the public safety concerns posed by irresponsible operation of dirt bikes and ATVs on our city streets and the emerging problem of street takeovers. She believes that deterrence is important, and enforcement of these motor vehicle offenses is particularly challenging for law enforcement given the dangers and liability concerns of apprehending the offenders by means of police pursuits. Educating the public about the dangers and increased penalties related to this conduct might act as an additional deterrent.

**Maty Milkovic, Vice Chair – Coventry Town Council:** Testified via correspondence in support of this bill. He testified that with the warm weather approaching there needs to be tools to protect citizens from the potential assault and inconvenience of the so-called “Street Takeovers”. He referenced an incident last summer that his neighboring in Tolland was the victim of a serious incident that blocked a state highway and caused severe damage to one resident’s car. He continued that new regulations and penalties may not stop all this malicious activity, but they will create a strong deterrent.

**Ian Powell, Deputy Chief – Hartford Police Department:** Testified in support of this bill via correspondence. He testified that street takeovers are no longer occurring in industrial sections of the city late at night it is now in and through local streets, parks and damaging property and operating recklessly in the City of Hartford. He also stated that it is not unusual to see hundreds of people involved in both activities. Street takeovers and illegal operation of ATVs and dirt bikes not only negatively impact the quality of life for our residents, but they are extremely dangerous, putting the operators, spectators and the community at risk. He is of the opinion that street takeovers and the operation of ATVs and dirt bikes are extremely challenging for law enforcement to address. Those involved often flee from the police, or use their large numbers to overwhelm officers, causing more dangerous encounters as we have seen in nearby towns. In the event we do identify and charge those involved in these events, the “bite does not have the teeth” to deter them from reengaging in this treacherous behavior. He believes that this bill will have immediate impact on behavior. Increasing fines to an impactful dollar amount, seizing vehicles and ensuring those involved pay increased fines, destroying ATVs and dirt bikes involved in illegal operation, improved license suspension consequences, are all measures that send a message that these issues are serious, and they will not be tolerated.

**Anonymous:** Anonymous testified in support of this bill via correspondence. Anonymous testified as a student at Ledyard High School and regarding the air quality and safety of individuals of the state. The exhaust is a danger to the planet and may cause headaches and disorientation for the drivers who breaths in these toxins.

**CT House Republicans:** Testified in support of this bill via correspondence. They testified that in Milford around 100 vehicles would assemble in a supermarket parking lot in the middle of the night, and when an officer approached the group of parked cars, the group responded by surrounding, hitting, and punching the officer. During a street takeover in Meriden, the group attacked and damaged private vehicles and a police cruiser. The Town of Tolland experienced a street takeover in which participants climbed on top of a local woman's car and jumped up and down. During a West Haven Street takeover, participants threw fireworks at responding police officers resulting in injury to one officer. With advanced warning, the Town of Shelton was able to proactively respond to and disperse an attempted street takeover involving over 500 vehicles. Another 1,500 vehicles trapped holiday shoppers in parking lots and backed up interstate 91 in both directions for a mile during a street-takeover in North Haven.

The HR went on to state that these street-takeovers are an example of dangerous lawlessness, and it really is a form of terrorism creeping up in our communities, and requests that the committee amend this bill to enhance the penalty for organizing or actively promoting a street takeover to a class D felony for the first offense and a class C felony for any subsequent offense.

**Terri Foster, Ledyard High School:** Testified as a 15-year-old student at Ledyard High School via correspondence in support of this bill. Terri testified that it is dangerous to walk her dogs as it is dangerous with the traffic to do so and wishes for the roads to be made safer for children and seniors alike and promote more active lives.

**Laurie Julian:** Testified in support of this bill via correspondence. Laurie testified about the terrorizing surge of individual takeovers statewide and cited a Hartford Courant article about taking on street takeovers on 2.17.2024. Increasing fines would be a deterrent and banning

the sale of the products to alter the sounds of the mufflers is another. She went on to comment that it defies logic that establishment cannot sell or purchase a new vehicle which produces a maximum decibel level, yet automotive parts stores can sell products which violate decibel levels to attach to vehicles. Medical studies demonstrate noise impacts physical and mental health, including stress, anxiety, high blood pressure, and sleep disorders.

**Martin Looney, Pres. Pro Tem – SDO:** Testified via correspondence in support of this bill. He suggests; revision provisions regarding forfeiture of certain illegally used vehicles, authorize municipalities to adopt an ordinance related to street takeovers, establish penalties for driving while a person's license is suspended or revoked due to a violation related to a street takeover, and establish a grant program to provide funds to municipalities to enforce laws related to street takeovers and the illegal use of certain vehicles.

**Mike Muszynski, CCM:** Testified in support of this bill via correspondence. He testified that currently, municipalities are limited to storing indefinitely, or selling the dirt bikes or ATVs, at a public auction. This is a financial and logistical burden as several of the vehicles are modified to the point where they are unable to be sold and auctioning off these vehicles would facilitate them continuing to circulate illegally in local communities. These vehicles should be taken out of service permanently.

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

**Jess Zaccagnino, Policy Counsel – ACLU-CT:** Testified in opposition to this bill via correspondence. Jess testified that her organization believes that due to systemic racism in policing across the country, the most effective way to keep communities of color safe from over-policing and police violence is to reimagine the role of police. That includes reducing the role, responsibilities, and presence of police, especially in Black and brown communities. It also requires taking funds currently spent on policing and reallocating them into programs and expenditures that build safe and healthy communities. The most frequent way that police encounter community members is through traffic enforcement. Traffic enforcement disproportionately impacts Black and brown people, and far too many encounters that begin as traffic stops end with Black people dead at the hands of police. She continued to testify that among the most vulnerable people who become enmeshed in the criminal legal system are young people under the age of 18, who suffer unique harms due to their involvement in the criminal legal system and are more likely to experience even wider racial disparities than exists for adults. Her organization believes that policymakers must reduce policing's responsibilities, scale, and tools to build an equitable future for all people in Connecticut.

**Reported by: Michelle Adams**

**Date: March 28, 2024**