



Legislative Testimony  
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**Written Testimony Supporting Senate Bill 1195, An Act Establishing  
Secondary Traffic Violations**

Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom, Ranking Members Kissel and Fishbein, and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is Jess Zaccagnino, and I am the policy counsel for the American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut (ACLU-CT). I am writing to testify in support of Senate Bill 1195, An Act Establishing Secondary Traffic Violations.

The ACLU-CT is committed to ending police violence and racism in policing in all forms. In addition to accountability measures, Connecticut must also divest from policing and reinvest in programs that build strong and safe communities. To build an equitable future for all people in Connecticut, policymakers must reduce policing's responsibilities, scale, and tools. One way to shrink policing in Connecticut is through designating secondary traffic stops for low-level equipment and administrative violations and prohibiting police from making traffic stops for those administrative violations. In Connecticut, Black and brown people are disproportionately subjected to equipment and administration motor vehicle violations. Black drivers are almost twice more likely and Latinx drivers are 1.5 times more likely to be stopped for an equipment-related violation compared to white drivers.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, Black drivers are 1.2 times more likely and Latinx drivers are 1.33 times more likely to be stopped for an administrative offense compared to white drivers.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Evaluation and Recommendations of a Primary and Secondary Traffic Offense*, CONN. RACIAL PROFILING PROHIBITION ADVISORY BD. (Feb. 2021), [https://www.cga.ct.gov/jud/tfs/20200116\\_Police%20Transparency%20and%20Accountability%20Task%20Force/Related%20Materials/Primary%20vs.%20Secondary%20Offense%20System%20Merits.pdf](https://www.cga.ct.gov/jud/tfs/20200116_Police%20Transparency%20and%20Accountability%20Task%20Force/Related%20Materials/Primary%20vs.%20Secondary%20Offense%20System%20Merits.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

This bill will limit interactions between police and people by designating a number of low-level traffic infractions as secondary violations and prohibiting police from stopping drivers for secondary violations. In 2021 alone, stops for traffic violations resulted in 117 deaths at the hands of police nationwide.<sup>3</sup> An analysis of over 20 million traffic stops, scholars found that police were 63 percent more likely to stop Black people even though, as a whole, they drive 16 percent less, and police were 115 percent more likely to search Black people than white people during a traffic stop.<sup>4</sup> Another study analyzing 4 million traffic stops in California corroborated this, finding that police were twice as likely to search Black people as white people, even though searches of Black people are less likely to yield contraband and evidence than searches of white people.<sup>5</sup> These results are also replicated here: vehicular stops result in many more searches of Black and Latinx drivers relative to white drivers, even though searches of drivers of color are much less likely to find criminal activity or contraband.<sup>6</sup> Black people are also overrepresented in both stops that do not elude to enforcement and ones that end in an arrest.<sup>7</sup> Many of these arrests begin with violations identified by this bill: broken tail lights, a partially obscured license plate resting in the back window, forgetting a driver's license at home.<sup>8</sup> The ACLU-CT supports the measures undertaken in Senate Bill 1195 that properly designate these minor infractions as secondary violations, as this would be a vital step in limiting the role that police play in our communities. As such, the ACLU-CT supports this bill and urges this Committee to do the same.

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<sup>3</sup> *2021 Police Violence Report*, MAPPING POLICE VIOLENCE (2021), available at <https://policeviolencereport.org/>; Libby Doyle & Susan Nembhard, *Police Traffic Stops Have Little to Do with Public Safety*, URBAN INST. (Apr. 26, 2021), available at <https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/police-traffic-stops-have-little-do-public-safety>.

<sup>4</sup> See generally KELSEY SHOUB ET AL., *SUSPECT CITIZENS: WHAT 20 MILLION TRAFFIC STOP TELLS US ABOUT POLICING AND RACE* (Cambridge Univ. Press 2018); see also Chris Horn, *Racial Disparities Revealed in Massive Traffic Stop Dataset*, UNIV. OF S.C. (June 12, 2020), <https://sc.edu/uofsc/posts/2020/06/racial-disparities-traffic-stops.php>.

<sup>5</sup> Magnus Lofstrom, Joseph Hayes, Brandon Martin & Deepak Premkumar, *Racial Disparities in Law Enforcement Stops*, PUB. POL'Y INST. CAL. (Oct. 2021), available at <https://www.ppic.org/publication/racial-disparities-in-law-enforcement-stops/>.

<sup>6</sup> See Ken Barone, James Fazzalano, Jesse Kalinowski & Matthew B. Ross, *State of Connecticut Traffic Stops Data Analysis and Findings, 2018*, CONN. RACIAL PROFILING PROHIBITION PROJECT (May 2020), <https://www.ctrp3.org/analysis-reports/reports>.

<sup>7</sup> *Id.*

<sup>8</sup> See, e.g., Doyle, *supra* note 3, available at <https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/police-traffic-stops-have-little-do-public-safety>; David D. Kirkpatrick, Steve Eder, Kim Barker & Julie Tate, *Why So Many Police Traffic Stops Turn Deadly*, N.Y. TIMES (Oct. 31, 2021), available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/31/us/police-traffic-stops-killings.html>.