



Legislative Testimony
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**Written Testimony Opposing
Senate Bill 422, An Act Concerning a Study of
Automated Traffic Enforcement Safety Devices**

Senator Leone, Representative Lemar, and distinguished members of the Transportation Committee:

My name is David McGuire, and I am executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut (ACLU-CT). I am submitting this testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 422, An Act Concerning a Study of Automated Traffic Enforcement Safety Devices.

The ACLU-CT has been vocally opposed to red light cameras because of the due process, privacy, and racial injustice issues raised by their use. Red light cameras would take photos and videos of vehicles at intersections, allowing municipalities to send tickets to the owners of cars allegedly caught in a violation.

There are due process issues with these cameras, because the camera systems ticket the registered owner of the car, regardless of who was driving. Weeks or months may pass between the alleged violation and the issuance of the ticket, impairing the owner's ability to recall the incident and put up an adequate defense. In addition, red light cameras can collect license plate data from all drivers, not just those who commit infractions. This raises serious privacy concerns and, in today's era, can lead to abuse by the federal government; one of the largest providers of license plate reader databases in the country recently signed an agency-wide contract to give Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) access to the information it collects, which jeopardizes the safety and wellbeing of immigrants throughout the country. Racial justice concerns are also at issue due to placement of cameras in larger municipalities where higher concentrations of people of color live, meaning that people of color are disproportionately affected. This targeting is unfair and discriminatory. Moreover, there is no research to suggest that people of color commit more

motor vehicle infractions than other people, so this targeting does not make communities safer.

Many cities across the country have had issues with red light camera systems, and some have even abandoned the systems altogether because of the many problems they have encountered. Ten states (Arkansas, Maine, Mississippi, Montana, Nevada, New Hampshire, South Carolina, South Dakota, West Virginia, and Wisconsin) prohibit the use of red light cameras in their communities. Leaders in South Dakota oppose red light cameras so much that the state began denying other states' requests for drivers' information for red light camera citations in 2014. The New Jersey legislature is exploring following suit, particularly because it is surrounded by states that employ red light cameras and speed cameras.

The number of communities using red light cameras fell from 533 in 2012 to 430 in 2016, according to a 2017 report of the National Conference of State Legislatures. In Miami, city commissioners unanimously voted to stop using red light cameras in December of 2017, and the city of Rochester, New York stopped using its red light camera system in 2016 because it was disproportionately hurting people in low-income neighborhoods, according to the city's mayor. In California alone, 60 communities have stopped using red light cameras, due partly to the increases in traffic accidents they have caused. Chicago's system of red light cameras has caused the city many expensive and complicated problems. An investigation found that not all of Chicago's red light cameras functioned correctly and that enforcement of them was inconsistent. Due to a lack of adequate notice to violators, Chicago then settled a class-action lawsuit for \$38.75 million.

In addition to the many other concerns about red light cameras, it is not clear that they solve any traffic safety issues. There are many conflicting studies about whether these devices actually make communities safer. A twelve-year study of red light cameras in Texas found that the devices did not improve public safety in the communities where they were employed at all. In fact, the study found that red light cameras can have the opposite effect because more people attempt to stop when a light is yellow or red, causing accidents that most likely would not have occurred without the presence of the cameras.

Communities using red light cameras have learned hard and expensive lessons about privatized, outsourced, for-profit, automated law enforcement, lessons that we need not repeat in Connecticut. They have learned that red light cameras enrich for-profit vendors and fail to provide the promised safety benefits and revenues for municipalities. In many places, they have also proven wildly unpopular with the public, which views them as a cynical cash grab. For example, Aurora, Colorado voters made their dislike of red light cameras known in November 2018 when they voted by a margin of two-to-one to end the city's red light camera program after the governor vetoed a statewide prohibition of red light cameras passed twice by the state legislature.

We strongly urge the committee to oppose this bill, which jeopardizes public safety, racial justice, privacy, immigrants' rights, and due process rights in our state.