Legislative Testimony

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**Sample Written Testimony Supporting House Bill 5324, An Act Establishing Secondary Traffic Violations**

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

1: Introduction of yourself and (if applicable) your organization

2: Explanation of how your personal values align with ending traffic stops for secondary traffic violations. Some suggested statements:

* To build an equitable future for all people in Connecticut, policymakers must reduce policing’s responsibilities, scale, and tools.
* Connecticut must divest from policing and reinvest in programs that build strong and safe communities. One way to shrink policing in Connecticut is through designating low-level equipment and administrative violations as secondary traffic violations and prohibiting police from pulling people over for those violations.
* The deaths of Tyre Nichols in Memphis and Anthony Vega Cruz right here in Connecticut following traffic stops demonstrate the need to minimize unnecessary police-civilian interactions on the road.
* Ending low-level traffic stops is a racial justice issue because Black and brown motorists are disproportionately pulled over by police.

3: Facts and data supporting the creation of secondary traffic 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.[[1]](#footnote-1) 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.[[2]](#footnote-2)
* In 2022, the Connecticut Racial Profiling Project analyzed five years of crash data and found that the secondary violations proposed by this bill do not contribute to motor vehicle crashes.[[3]](#footnote-3) For example, tinted windows accounted for 4,378 traffic stops but contributed to only 0.1% of crashes.[[4]](#footnote-4)
* A single headlight tail light, reflector, or broken brake light accounted for 24,000 stops but contributed to 0.1 percent of crashes.[[5]](#footnote-5)
* License plate display violations accounted for over 14,000 stops but did not appear to have a significant contribution to crashes.[[6]](#footnote-6)
* HB 5324 is based on recommendations by the state Police Transparency and Accountability Task Force.
* In Newington, Connecticut, defective lighting violations were making up 40% of the traffic stops. Only one of the 1,608 traffic stops made for defective lighting violations that year had actually resulted in the driver being charged with a DUI. After shifting enforcement priorities, from 2015 to 2019, they saw a 250% increase (from 18 to 63) in stops that resulted in a DUI arrest.
* In Hamden, Connecticut, police were using pretextual stops in a primarily Black neighborhood. After shifting enforcement tactics to focus on dangerous driving behaviors, they saw a 5% drop in crime.
* In New Haven, Connecticut, the chief reprioritized traffic enforcement to focus on dangerous driving after finding significant racial disparities in enforcement. The following year, the department reported equipment and administrative offenses were reduced by 6%, accidents dropped by 15%, and crime dropped by 5%.
* Virginia, Philadelphia, and Pittsburgh have passed laws ending stops for minor infractions, and California, Washington State, and others are considering these measures.

4: Conclude and ask for the committee to support the bill.

* The legislature must pass House Bill 5324 to end low-level traffic stops in the state for violations that do not impact public safety but do increase racial disparities in policing. Thank you very much.

1. *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>. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *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>. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Matthew B. Ross, Jesse J. Kalinowski & Kenneth Barone, *Testing for Disparities in Traffic Stops: Best Practices from the Connecticut Model*, 19 Criminology & Pub. Pol’y 1289, 1290 (2020). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *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>. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. *Id.* [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. *Id.* [↑](#footnote-ref-6)