



# House of Representatives

General Assembly

**File No. 767**

January Session, 2025

Substitute House Bill No. 7132

*House of Representatives, April 24, 2025*

The Committee on Judiciary reported through REP. STAFSTROM of the 129th Dist., Chairperson of the Committee on the part of the House, that the substitute bill ought to pass.

## **AN ACT CONCERNING NON-SAFETY-RELATED TRAFFIC STOPS AND DRIVING WHILE CONSUMING CANNABIS.**

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

1 Section 1. Subsections (a) to (c), inclusive, of section 14-18 of the  
2 general statutes are repealed and the following is substituted in lieu  
3 thereof (*Effective October 1, 2025*):

4 (a) (1) Each motor vehicle for which one number plate has been issued  
5 shall, while in use or operation upon any public highway, display in a  
6 conspicuous place at the rear of such vehicle the number plate. The  
7 commissioner may issue a sticker denoting the expiration date of the  
8 registration. Such sticker shall be displayed in such place on the vehicle  
9 as the commissioner may direct. Such sticker may contain the  
10 corresponding letters and numbers of the registration and number plate  
11 issued by the commissioner.

12 (2) Each motor vehicle for which two number plates have been issued  
13 shall, while in use or operation upon any public highway, display such

14 number plates in a conspicuous place at (A) the front, and (B) the rear  
15 of such vehicle, [the number plates] which may include against a  
16 vehicle's rear window, provided the numerals and letters on any such  
17 number plate are plainly legible. The commissioner may issue a sticker  
18 denoting the expiration date of the registration. Such sticker shall be  
19 displayed in such place on the vehicle as the commissioner may direct.  
20 Such sticker may contain the corresponding letters and numbers of the  
21 number plate issued by the commissioner.

22 (b) Repealed by 1969, P.A. 247, S. 1.

23 (c) Official number plates when displayed upon motor vehicles shall  
24 be [entirely] substantially unobscured and the numerals and letters  
25 [thereon] on such plates shall be plainly legible at all times. Such number  
26 plates shall be horizontal [,] and shall be fastened so as not to swing,  
27 [and, during the time when a motor vehicle is required to display lights,  
28 the rear number plate shall be so illuminated as to be legible at a distance  
29 of fifty feet.] Nothing may be affixed to a motor vehicle or to the official  
30 number plates displayed on such vehicle that obscures or impairs the  
31 visibility of [any information] the numerals and letters on such number  
32 plates. Not more than one number plate shall be displayed on the front  
33 or rear of any motor vehicle in operation upon the public highways of  
34 the state; provided any motor vehicle may, upon permission of the  
35 commissioner, display more than one number plate in front or rear,  
36 subject to such conditions as the commissioner prescribes. If any  
37 number plate supplied by the commissioner is lost, or if the registered  
38 number [thereon] on such plate becomes mutilated or illegible, the  
39 owner of or the person in control of the motor vehicle for which such  
40 number plate was furnished shall immediately place a temporary  
41 number plate bearing said registration number upon such motor  
42 vehicle, which temporary number plate shall conform to the regular  
43 number plate and shall be displayed as nearly as possible as [herein]  
44 provided in this section for such regular number plate; and such owner  
45 shall, within forty-eight hours after such loss or mutilation of the  
46 number plate, give notice thereof to the commissioner and apply for a  
47 new number plate. The commissioner may issue a permit to operate

48 with such temporary plate and shall supply new number plates upon  
49 payment of the fee therefor as provided in section 14-50a. Upon receipt  
50 of such new number plates and new certificate, the remaining old  
51 number plate, if any, and certificate shall be surrendered to the  
52 commissioner. As used in this subsection, "substantially unobscured"  
53 means that the number plate is not significantly blocked or concealed by  
54 an obstacle or obstruction, to an extent that allows for a reasonable  
55 person or an electronic device capable of recording data on, or taking a  
56 photograph of, a motor vehicle or such motor vehicle's number plate to  
57 read the numerals and letters of such plate.

58 Sec. 2. Section 14-96a of the general statutes is repealed and the  
59 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective October 1, 2025*):

60 (a) Every vehicle upon a highway within this state shall display such  
61 lighted lamps and illuminating devices as may be required under the  
62 provisions of this section and sections [14-96a] 14-96b to 14-96aa,  
63 inclusive, (1) at any time from a half-hour after sunset to a half-hour  
64 before sunrise, (2) at any time when, due to insufficient light or  
65 unfavorable atmospheric conditions, persons and vehicles on the  
66 highway are not clearly discernible at a distance of five hundred feet  
67 ahead, and (3) at any time during periods of precipitation, including,  
68 but not limited to, periods of snow, rain or fog.

69 (b) Whenever in said sections any requirement is declared as to  
70 distance from which certain lamps and devices shall render objects  
71 visible or within which such lamps or devices shall be visible, such  
72 requirement shall apply during the times stated in subsection (a) of this  
73 section in respect to a vehicle without load when upon a straight, level,  
74 unlighted highway under normal atmospheric conditions unless a  
75 different time or condition is expressly stated.

76 (c) Whenever in said sections any requirement is declared as to the  
77 mounted height of lamps or devices, such requirement shall mean the  
78 height measured from the center of such lamps or devices to the level  
79 ground upon which the vehicle stands when such vehicle is without a  
80 load.

81 (d) Failure to [provide lighted] illuminate lamps and illuminating  
82 devices at such time as required by this section shall be an infraction.

83 (e) To the extent that a violation concerning the number, placement  
84 or intensity of a lamp or illuminating device, or any other technical  
85 specification provided in sections 14-96b to 14-96aa, inclusive,  
86 concerning a lamp or illuminating device would constitute a violation  
87 under this section, such violation shall be enforced under section 14-96b,  
88 14-96c, as amended by this act, 14-96d, 14-96e, 14-96f, 14-96g, 14-96i, 14-  
89 96j, 14-96k, 14-96l, 14-96m, 14-96n, 14-96o, 14-96p, 14-96q, 14-96r, 14-96s,  
90 14-96t, 14-96u, 14-96x, 14-96y, as amended by this act, 14-96z or 14-96aa,  
91 and not under this section.

92 Sec. 3. Section 14-96c of the general statutes is repealed and the  
93 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective October 1, 2025*):

94 (a) After October 1, 1967, every motor vehicle, trailer, semitrailer and  
95 pole trailer, and any other vehicle which is being drawn at the end of a  
96 combination of vehicles, shall be equipped with at least two tail lamps  
97 mounted on the rear, which, when lighted as required in subsection (a)  
98 of section 14-96a, as amended by this act, shall emit a red light plainly  
99 visible from a distance of one thousand feet to the rear, except that  
100 passenger cars manufactured or assembled prior to October 1, 1957, and  
101 motorcycles shall have at least one such tail lamp. On a combination of  
102 vehicles, only the tail lamps on the rearmost vehicle need actually be  
103 seen from the distance specified. On vehicles equipped with more than  
104 one tail lamp, the lamps shall be mounted on the same level and as  
105 widely spaced laterally as practicable.

106 (b) Every tail lamp upon every vehicle shall be located at a mounted  
107 height of not more than seventy-two inches nor less than fifteen inches.

108 (c) The rear registration plate shall be so illumined with a white light  
109 as to render it clearly legible from a distance of fifty feet to the rear. Any  
110 tail lamp or tail lamps, together with any separate lamp or lamps for  
111 illuminating the rear registration plate, shall be so wired as to be lighted  
112 whenever the head lamps or auxiliary driving lamps are lighted, except

113 that any vehicle equipped by the manufacturer with daytime running  
114 lamps which meet federal requirements may have such daytime  
115 running lamps illuminated without illumination of the tail lamps or rear  
116 registration plate.

117 (d) Failure to have tail lamps [or failure to illuminate the rear  
118 registration plate] as required in this section shall be an infraction.

119 Sec. 4. Section 14-96y of the general statutes is repealed and the  
120 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective October 1, 2025*):

121 (a) At all times specified in subsection (a) of section 14-96a, as  
122 amended by this act, at least two lighted lamps shall be displayed, one  
123 on each side at the front of every motor vehicle other than a motorcycle,  
124 except when such vehicle is parked subject to the regulations governing  
125 lights on parked vehicles.

126 (b) Whenever a motor vehicle equipped with head lamps as [herein]  
127 required by this section is also equipped with any auxiliary lamps or a  
128 spot lamp or any other lamp on the front thereof projecting a beam of  
129 intensity greater than three hundred candlepower, not more than a total  
130 of four of any such lamps on the front of a vehicle shall be lighted at any  
131 one time when upon a highway.

132 (c) [Failure to have] Any operator of a motor vehicle that does not  
133 have at least two lamps as required by this section shall be deemed to  
134 have committed an infraction, except that if such motor vehicle has at  
135 least one such lamp, such operator shall be issued a warning for  
136 defective equipment under the provisions of subsection (c) of section 14-  
137 103 for a first offense, and for any subsequent violation of this section,  
138 such operator shall be deemed to have committed an infraction.

139 Sec. 5. Section 14-99f of the general statutes is repealed and the  
140 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective October 1, 2025*):

141 (a) Each motor vehicle shall be equipped with a windshield of a type  
142 prescribed by section 14-100 and a windshield cleaner or wiper in  
143 effective working order located directly in front of the operator while in

144 use on the highway. The windshield shall be reasonably free of defects  
145 and accumulations, inside and out, of snow, ice, condensation and dirt.  
146 The provisions of this subsection shall not apply to a motorcycle or a  
147 vehicle designed by the manufacturer for nonhighway operation  
148 without a windshield.

149 (b) No person shall operate a motor vehicle required to be equipped  
150 with such a windshield if the windshield is in a condition to interfere  
151 with an unobstructed view of the highway in a manner that significantly  
152 blocks or conceals by use of an obstacle or obstruction to an extent that  
153 would prevent a reasonable person from viewing the highway.

154 (c) No article, device, sticker or ornament shall be attached or affixed  
155 to or hung on or in any motor vehicle in such a manner or location as to  
156 interfere with the operator's unobstructed view of the highway in a  
157 manner that significantly blocks or conceals by use of an obstacle or  
158 obstruction to an extent that would prevent a reasonable person from  
159 viewing the highway or to distract the attention of the operator.

160 (d) Violation of any provision of this section shall be an infraction.

161 Sec. 6. Subsection (a) of section 14-12 of the general statutes is  
162 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective October*  
163 *1, 2025*):

164 (a) No motor vehicle shall be operated, towed or parked on any  
165 highway, except as otherwise expressly provided, unless it is registered  
166 with the commissioner, provided any motor vehicle may be towed for  
167 repairs or necessary work if it bears the number plates of a licensed and  
168 registered dealer, manufacturer or repairer and provided any motor  
169 vehicle which is validly registered in another state may, for a period of  
170 ninety days following establishment by the owner of residence in this  
171 state, be operated on any highway without first being registered with  
172 the commissioner. Except as otherwise provided in this subsection, (1) a  
173 person commits an infraction if such person (A) registers a motor  
174 vehicle [he or she] such person does not own, or (B) operates, allows the  
175 operation of, parks or allows the parking of an unregistered motor

176 vehicle on any highway, or (2) a resident of this state who operates or  
177 parks a motor vehicle such resident owns with number plates issued by  
178 another state on any highway shall be fined two hundred fifty dollars,  
179 except that the fine shall be suspended for a first time violator who  
180 presents proof of registration for the motor vehicle subsequent to the  
181 violation but prior to the imposition of a fine. If the owner of a motor  
182 vehicle previously registered with the commissioner, the registration of  
183 which expired not more than [thirty] sixty days previously, operates,  
184 allows the operation of, parks or allows that parking of such a motor  
185 vehicle, such owner shall be fined the amount designated for the  
186 infraction of failure to renew a registration, but the right to retain his or  
187 her operator's license shall not be affected. No operator other than the  
188 owner shall be subject to penalty for the operation or parking of such a  
189 previously registered motor vehicle. As used in this subsection, the term  
190 "unregistered motor vehicle" includes any vehicle that is not eligible for  
191 registration by the commissioner due to the absence of necessary  
192 equipment or other characteristics of the vehicle that make it unsuitable  
193 for highway operation, unless the operation of such vehicle is expressly  
194 permitted by another provision of this chapter or chapter 248.

195 Sec. 7. Section 53a-213a of the general statutes is repealed and the  
196 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective October 1, 2025*):

197 (a) A person is guilty of smoking, otherwise inhaling or ingesting  
198 cannabis, as defined in section 21a-420, while operating a motor vehicle  
199 when he or she smokes, otherwise inhales or ingests cannabis, as  
200 defined in section 21a-420, while operating a motor vehicle upon a  
201 public highway of this state or upon any road of any specially chartered  
202 municipal association or of any district organized under the provisions  
203 of chapter 105, a purpose of which is the construction and maintenance  
204 of roads and sidewalks, or in any parking area for ten cars or more, or  
205 upon any private road on which a speed limit has been established in  
206 accordance with the provisions of section 14-218a or upon any school  
207 property. No person shall be convicted of smoking or otherwise  
208 inhaling or ingesting cannabis while operating a motor vehicle and  
209 possessing or having under such person's control a controlled substance

210 upon the same transaction. A person may be charged and prosecuted  
211 for either or each such offense, a violation of operating a motor vehicle  
212 while under the influence of any drug and any other applicable offense  
213 upon the same information.

214 (b) Smoking, otherwise inhaling or ingesting cannabis while  
215 operating a motor vehicle is a class C misdemeanor.

216 (c) No peace officer shall stop a motor vehicle for a violation of this  
217 section if such violation is the sole reason for such stop, unless such  
218 officer (1) observes active cannabis consumption by the operator of the  
219 motor vehicle, and (2) detects the odor of burnt cannabis.

220 Sec. 8. Section 53a-213b of the general statutes is repealed and the  
221 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective October 1, 2025*):

222 (a) A person is guilty of smoking or otherwise inhaling or ingesting  
223 cannabis, as defined in section 21a-420, in a motor vehicle when he or  
224 she smokes or otherwise inhales or ingests cannabis in a motor vehicle  
225 that is being operated by another person upon a public highway of this  
226 state or upon any road of any specially chartered municipal association  
227 or of any district organized under the provisions of chapter 105, a  
228 purpose of which is the construction and maintenance of roads and  
229 sidewalks, or in any parking area for ten cars or more, or upon any  
230 private road on which a speed limit has been established in accordance  
231 with the provisions of section 14-218a or upon any school property. No  
232 person shall be convicted of smoking or otherwise inhaling or ingesting  
233 cannabis as a passenger in a motor vehicle and possessing or having  
234 under such person's control a controlled substance upon the same  
235 transaction, but such person may be charged and prosecuted for both  
236 offenses upon the same information.

237 (b) Smoking or otherwise inhaling or ingesting cannabis in a motor  
238 vehicle is a class D misdemeanor.

239 (c) No peace officer shall stop a motor vehicle for a violation of this  
240 section if such violation is the sole reason for such stop, unless such



241 officer (1) observes active cannabis consumption by the operator of the  
242 motor vehicle, and (2) detects the odor of burnt cannabis.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:

Section 1	<i>October 1, 2025</i>	14-18(a) to (c)
Sec. 2	<i>October 1, 2025</i>	14-96a
Sec. 3	<i>October 1, 2025</i>	14-96c
Sec. 4	<i>October 1, 2025</i>	14-96y
Sec. 5	<i>October 1, 2025</i>	14-99f
Sec. 6	<i>October 1, 2025</i>	14-12(a)
Sec. 7	<i>October 1, 2025</i>	53a-213a
Sec. 8	<i>October 1, 2025</i>	53a-213b

**JUD**      *Joint Favorable Subst.*

*The following Fiscal Impact Statement and Bill Analysis are prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and do not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose. In general, fiscal impacts are based upon a variety of informational sources, including the analyst's professional knowledge. Whenever applicable, agency data is consulted as part of the analysis, however final products do not necessarily reflect an assessment from any specific department.*

## **OFA Fiscal Note**

### **State Impact:**

<b>Agency Affected</b>	<b>Fund-Effect</b>	<b>FY 26 \$</b>	<b>FY 27 \$</b>
State Revenues	Various - Potential Revenue Loss	See Below	See Below
Judicial Dept. (Probation)	GF - Potential Cost	Minimal	Minimal
Resources of the General Fund	GF - Potential Revenue Gain	Minimal	Minimal

Note: Various=Various; GF=General Fund

### **Municipal Impact:** None

### **Explanation**

The bill decreases the standard for what constitutes certain license plate, headlight, or windshield equipment violations, which results in a potential decrease in revenue to the state from fines.<sup>1</sup>

The bill also allows officers to stop motor vehicles for violating laws against using cannabis in a vehicle which results in a potential cost to the Judicial Department for probation and a potential revenue gain to the General Fund from fines.<sup>2</sup> On average, the marginal cost for supervision in the community is less than \$600<sup>3</sup> each year for adults and

<sup>1</sup> In FY 24, there were 2,732 charges recorded and \$73,150 in associated revenue collected under CGS §§ 14-18(a)(2), 14-96y, and 14-99f.

<sup>2</sup> In FY 24, there were 5 charges recorded and \$250 in associated revenue collected under CGS §§ 53a-213a and 53a-213b.

<sup>3</sup> Probation marginal cost is based on services provided by private providers and only includes costs that increase with each additional participant. This does not include a cost for additional supervision by a probation officer unless a new offense is anticipated to result in enough additional offenders to require additional probation officers.

\$450 each year for juveniles.

The bill makes various other changes to motor vehicle violations laws that are not anticipated to result in a fiscal impact to the state or municipalities.

***The Out Years***

The annualized ongoing fiscal impact identified above would continue into the future subject to the actual number of violations and infractions.

**OLR Bill Analysis****sHB 7132*****AN ACT CONCERNING NON-SAFETY-RELATED TRAFFIC STOPS  
AND DRIVING WHILE CONSUMING CANNABIS.*****SUMMARY**

This bill makes several changes to motor vehicle violation laws. First, the bill decreases the standard for what constitutes certain license plate, headlight, or windshield equipment violations.

The bill allows an officer to stop a motor vehicle for a violation of the laws against using cannabis in a vehicle if the officer sees the operator actively consuming cannabis and smells burnt cannabis.

It extends, from 30 days to 60 days, the grace period after a motor vehicle registration expires during which a violation is considered “failure to renew” and subject to only an infraction penalty and not a potential driver’s license suspension (§ 6).

Lastly, the bill makes technical and conforming changes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2025

**VEHICLE EQUIPMENT VIOLATIONS*****License Plate Display***

By law, vehicles issued two license plates must display them in a conspicuous place on the vehicle’s front and rear. The bill allows for the rear plate to be displayed in the rear window as long as the plate’s numbers and letters are plainly legible.

The bill also lessens the standard for what is considered obscuring license plates. Current law requires plates to be entirely unobscured and prohibits placing anything on a vehicle or license plate that obscures any information on the plate. The bill instead (1) requires that a plate be

substantially unobscured, meaning that an obstruction does not significantly block or conceal it in a way that prevents a reasonable person or an electronic device that records data on or photographs a vehicle or its plate from reading the plate, and (2) prohibits placing anything that obscures the plate's numbers and letters, rather than any information on the plate.

It also eliminates the specific infraction penalty for failing to illuminate the rear license plate with a white light that makes it clearly legible from 50 feet away. Vehicles with these violations may still be stopped and issued a warning for defective equipment, which by law requires the vehicle owner to have the vehicle taken to an inspection station and restored to safe operating condition within the next 10 days (CGS § 14-103).

### ***Headlights and Other Required Lights***

Existing law requires motor vehicles other than motorcycles to have two working headlights, one on each side of the vehicle's front, when being driven at certain times (e.g., nighttime or when it's raining or foggy). Not doing this is an infraction. But under the bill, if the vehicle has one working headlight, the operator must receive a defective equipment warning for a first offense (subsequent offenses remain infractions).

It also requires violations of laws on the number, placement, and intensity of lights or other technical specifications included in the equipment laws that would also be a violation of the use of lights while driving statute (CGS § 14-96a) to be enforced under the equipment statutes and not under the use of lights law.

### ***Windshield Obstructions***

Current law generally prohibits (1) operating a motor vehicle when the condition of its windshield interferes with an unobstructed view of the road and (2) attaching, placing, or hanging a device, sticker, or ornament on or in a vehicle in a way or location that obstructs the driver's view or distracts the driver.

The bill specifies that, in these cases, the windshield's condition or obstruction must significantly block or conceal the driver's view, as measured by what a reasonable person could see. By law, these violations are infractions.

## **CANNABIS USE IN VEHICLES**

By law, it is a class C misdemeanor to smoke, otherwise inhale, or ingest cannabis while driving a motor vehicle on certain roads or properties, and a class D misdemeanor to do these things as a motor vehicle passenger. However, current law prohibits peace officers (e.g., state and local police) from stopping a vehicle solely for these violations. The bill allows them to do so if the officer sees the driver actively consuming cannabis and smells burnt cannabis odor.

A class C misdemeanor is punishable by up to three months in prison, a fine of up to \$500, or both, and a class D misdemeanor is punishable by up to 30 days in prison, a fine of up to \$250, or both.

## **BACKGROUND**

### ***Infractions***

Infractions are punishable by fines, usually set by Superior Court judges, of between \$35 and \$90, plus a \$20 or \$35 surcharge and an additional fee based on the fine's amount. There may be other added charges depending upon the type of infraction. For example, certain motor vehicle infractions trigger a Special Transportation Fund surcharge of 50% of the fine. An infraction is not a crime, and violators can generally pay the fine by mail without making a court appearance.

## **COMMITTEE ACTION**

Judiciary Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 40 Nay 1 (04/07/2025)