

Transportation Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-5766

AN ACT INCREASING THE PENALTY FOR SUBSEQUENT OFFENSES OF

Title: PARKING IN FRONT OF A FIRE HYDRANT.

Vote Date: 3/12/2025

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 2/10/2025

File No.:

***Disclaimer:** The following JOINT FAVORABLE Report is prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and does not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose.*

SPONSORS OF BILL:

Transportation Committee

CO-SPONSORS:

Rep. Alphonse Paolillo

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill would increase the fine for the subsequent infraction of current statute prohibiting the placing of a stationary vehicle within ten feet of a fire hydrant to up to \$200. Blockage of fire hydrants has grown exponentially over the last few years, making the job of firefighters much harder, delaying response time, and leading to deaths and damage that are preventable. This bill aims to deter further blockage of fire hydrants and signify their importance to firefighters.

SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE:

The substitute language adds additional language on how the judicial branch records in response to testimony.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

External Affairs Division, State of Connecticut Judicial Branch

Provided general comments on the bill. Notes an implementation issue with section 1(e), noting that initial and subsequent offenses should be categorized separately to help the judicial branch keep track of statistics of these offense and allow law enforcement to charge offenders appropriately.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Representative Alphonse Paolillo, Connecticut General Assembly

Representative Paolillo supports the bill, emphasizing the consequences of blocking a fire hydrant to the men and women in uniform that are trying to fight them. A lack of access to water during an emergency of this type can have disastrous consequences. These incidents have risen consistently. The New Haven Fire Department responds to 36,000 calls for service annually, with responses to over 100 building fires annually. He further points that this fine has been stagnant since 2010.

Danny Coughlin, Assistant Chief and Chief of Operations, New Haven Fire Department

Assistant Chief Coughlin supports the bill, highlighting the importance of the fire hydrant in responding to fires in a timely manner. One blocked fire hydrant causes a delay in water, which increase threats to life and property damage. Fire hydrants being blocked is common, especially by food delivery drivers. The \$75 fine has proven not to be an effective deterrent. In New Haven, blocked fire hydrant cases are up 150%. The consequences for a blocked fire hydrant is serious, especially considering that fires triple in size every 30 seconds and the blockage of just one fire hydrant delays services by one minute and thirty seconds. The responses to the 100 calls per year in New Haven (the most in the state) to building fires face at least one block hydrant, which pose extreme and unnecessary risks to overcome.

Betsy Gara, Executive Director, Connecticut Council of Small Towns

Ms. Gara supports the bill, emphasizing the fact that a blocked fire hydrants and significantly interfere with a response to a call and hinder the safety of others, but that people continue to ignore the importance of them. Believes increasing the penalty will signal a strong message of zero tolerance of blocking fire hydrants in CT.

Elizabeth Gara, Executive Director, Connecticut Water Works Association

Ms. Gara supports the bill, highlighting the fact that water facilities need fire hydrants to be clear for maintenance and testing to ensure they are in good condition for use, and blocking fire hydrants hinders this. Increasing the penalties for blocking a hydrant will be a good deterrent to allow water utilities to access to and test hydrant to ensure their effectiveness.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

No testimony in opposition to the bill was submitted.

Reported by: Patrick Riley

Date: 3/13/2025