

Judiciary Committee

JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-7132

AN ACT CONCERNING NON-SAFETY-RELATED TRAFFIC STOPS AND

Title: DRIVING WHILE CONSUMING CANNABIS.

Vote Date: 4/7/2025

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/7/2025

File No.: 767

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Judiciary Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

The bill makes minor changes to Connecticut's motor vehicle statutes that have little to no impact on roadway safety to address concerns that these statutes are disproportionately contributing to racial and ethnic disparities in traffic stops. The intent of this bill is to strengthen the community trust and free law enforcement resources by getting rid of certain low-level traffic safety violations. Black and Hispanic drivers experience higher stoppage rates when compared to white drivers and often lack further violations upon inspection by law enforcement officials. While there are hundreds of violations that are outlined in Connecticut's traffic code, this bill is only focused on a small number.

SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE:

The substitute language adds two new sections concerning driving while using cannabis, and amends section four by providing for a warning for a first offense of driving with just one headlight. Any other violation of that section remains an infraction as provided in existing law.

Patrick Griffin, Chief State's Attorney, Division of Criminal Justice: Patrick Griffin submitted testimony in opposition of section four of this legislation because only one working headlamp on cars presents a clear and present danger and is a safety hazard. He believes that it is necessary to the safety of the public that drivers are alerted to failure of one headlamp, and that police do not issue tickets when pulling over motorists for this reason.

Garrett Eucalitto, Commissioner, CT Department of Transportation: Garrett Eucalitto submitted testimony in opposition to section four of this bill because it conflicts with existing

federal law that requires two working headlamps on all cars. They state that any vehicle that does not meet the federal safety standards should be deemed unsafe.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Daniel Bodah, Esq., Senior Program Associate, Vera Institute of Justice: Daniel Bodah submitted testimony in support of this legislation because it will enable law enforcement to focus limited resources on unsafe driver behavior. This bill can increase public trust as the frequency of non-safety related traffic stops and their disproportionate impact on communities of color instill public distrust of law enforcement. Additionally, their data shows that this legislation has wide voter support.

Jess Zaccagnino, Policy Counsel, ACLU CT: Jess Zaccagnino submitted testimony in support of this legislation because it will allow police to shift enforcement priorities to focus on safety-related enforcement while shrinking racial disparities in policing. This bill addresses racial inequality when it comes to traffic stops by reducing the number of non-safety related reasons law enforcement are permitted to conduct one.

Brian Donahue, Founder, NOT JUST US: Brian Donahue submitted testimony in support of this legislation because their data shows that these non-serious infractions do not stop car accidents or other safety issues, and that black and brown drivers are pulled over for these infractions more than white ones. This also allows police to focus their resources on far more serious matters.

Ava Hayden: Ava Hayden submitted testimony in support of this legislation because, as a black teenager, she feels it is important to reduce racial disparities in traffic stops for non-safety related offenses. This bill will enable police to focus their resources on more serious, dangerous driving violations.

Sheyanne Hayden: Sheyanne Hayden supports this legislation because low level traffic stops do not impact public safety but do increase racial disparities among policing.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Connecticut Police Chiefs Association: The CT Police Chiefs Association submitted testimony in opposition of this legislation because they disagree that a motor vehicle with only one functioning headlamp is not a safety issue. They also believe that the provisions surrounding display of license plate will make it more difficult for speed and red-light cameras to accurately read plates.

Christopher Olsen: Christopher Olsen submitted testimony in opposition of this legislation because he believes it is an attempt by the state to impede the abilities of law enforcement under the guise of addressing racial disparities, and that police must receive broad support from the politicians of this state.

Reported by: Griffin Olshan

Date: April 23, 2025