

Transportation Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No: HB-5463 / [Bill Status](#) / [Public Hearing Testimony](#)

Title: AN ACT CONCERNING HIGHWAY SAFETY.

Vote Date: 3/16/2026

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 3/9/2026

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Transportation Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

The bill updates distracted driving laws to accommodate new technology. It makes distracted driving in a work zone a reckless driving offense in attempt to deter distracted driving, and to keep roadway workers safe.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Garrett Eucalitto, Commissioner, Department of Transportation

CTDOT supports updates to Connecticut's distracted driving laws to address newer technologies and improve work zone safety. Section 1 would update the state's hands-free law to include "video converters," devices that allow drivers to stream videos on dashboard screens while a vehicle is in motion. Section 2 would make using such devices in a highway work zone an automatic reckless driving violation. Distracted driving remains a serious safety issue: in 2023 there were 5,202 distracted driving crashes in Connecticut, causing 12 fatalities and over 731 injuries. In work zones specifically, there were 49 distracted driving crashes and 2 fatalities. CTDOT also reported 101 incidents of its vehicles being struck last year, highlighting the dangers faced by roadside and highway workers.

Patrick Griffin, Chief States Attorney, Division of Criminal Justice

The Division of Criminal Justice (DCJ) supports HB 5463 as a measure to improve highway safety, reduce distracted driving, and prevent motor vehicle fatalities. Although overall traffic deaths declined slightly in early 2026, data on distracted driving—especially in highway work zones—remains concerning. DCJ commends the Connecticut Department of Transportation for advancing the proposal and states that HB 5463 would promote safer driving practices and

strengthen public policy aimed at reducing distracted driving. The Division urges the committee to pass the bill.

Ronnell Higgins, Commissioner, Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection

The Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP) supports legislation to reduce distracted driving and improve roadway safety. As first responders to crashes, the Connecticut State Police see the dangers of distracted driving firsthand. In 2025, troopers made 2,808 traffic stops specifically for distracted driving, and 11,817 stops when including related violations such as improper lane use and failure to obey stop signs. DESPP supports clearer laws defining distracted driving, including newer distractions like video displays and infotainment systems. Clear definitions help officers enforce the law consistently and educate drivers.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Nate Brown, Business Manager, Operating Engineers Local 478

The IUOE, representing over 20,000 workers in the Northeast and more than 3,000 in Connecticut's Local 478, supports HB 5463 to improve highway work zone safety. The 2024 U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries reports 1,391 deaths in transportation and material-moving occupations, the highest of any occupational group. Transportation incidents accounted for 38.2% of all workplace fatalities, and construction and extraction workers experienced 1,032 deaths in 2024. These statistics highlight the significant dangers faced by infrastructure workers. Local 478 members work on major Connecticut projects such as the Mixmaster, the I-91/I-691 interchange, and the Charter Oak and Gold Star bridges. The union supports elevating distracted driving in work zones to reckless driving to deter dangerous behavior and protect workers.

Carolina Cavalcante, President, Tilcon Connecticut

Ms. Cavalcante from Tilcon Connecticut describes the serious safety risks faced by road construction workers who operate daily in active highway work zones near live traffic. The company employs about 700 workers, including more than 200 directly working in these dangerous environments. The testimony highlights frequent incidents of vehicles entering work zones, striking crash trucks, cones, or equipment, often dangerously close to workers. Distracted driving—especially from cell phone use—has increased these hazards, causing vehicles to swerve near crews. She emphasizes the frightening reality of standing on highways while traffic speeds by and urges support for legislation that improves work zone safety. While not a complete solution, such measures would be an important step toward ensuring workers return home safely after each shift.

Carl Chisem, President, CT Employees Union Independent

Mr. Chisem highlights Section 2 of HB 5463 would classify distracted driving in highway work zones as reckless driving to better protect workers. Statistics highlight the seriousness of the issue. In Connecticut's Automated Work Zone Speed Control Pilot Program, more than 24,900 warnings and about 750 violations were issued, demonstrating widespread speeding in work zones. According to the UConn Connecticut Crash Data Repository, there were over 2,000 work zone crashes and 6 fatalities between 2023 and 2024. In 2022 alone, distracted driving caused 5,318 crashes, 8 deaths, and more than 787 injuries statewide. Nationally, transportation incidents remain the leading cause of occupational fatalities, according to the

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Supporters argue stronger penalties are needed to deter dangerous driving and improve safety for highway workers.

Corey Geisman, Executive Director, SEIU CT State Council

Mr. Geisman supports HB 5463 as distracted driving remains a major safety issue, contributing to over 5,000 crashes in Connecticut in 2022, with many incidents likely underreported. Current fines have not been a sufficient deterrent, and distracted driving rates remain higher than before the pandemic. Research cited from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration indicates that states with stronger distracted driving laws have lower per-capita traffic fatalities, showing that policy and enforcement can influence driver behavior. HB 5463 would modernize Connecticut's laws by expanding what qualifies as distracted driving and increasing penalties, helping reduce crashes and improve safety on the state's highways.

Aaron Goode

Support but revise Lines 147-164 to authorize a non-monetary class of legal remedy that includes use of court-ordered technological interventions such as installation of Intelligent Speed Assistance (ISA) devices on vehicles where violations of CGS Section 14 have occurred, building off the provisions of Public Act 25-65. Technological intervention, e.g. ISA, is the next step in moving toward "Vision Zero" in Connecticut. Repeat offenders of reckless or distracted driving, including offenses stipulated here in Lines 54-143, should be subject to both financial penalties as well as restrictions or modifications to their driving privileges, including but not limited to, the use of active, GPS-linked speed-limiting technology installed on their vehicles pursuant to a court order. Furthermore, I recommend that Lines 120-126 should be combined with the provisions of SB-234 to create an ISA pilot for 16- and 17-year-old drivers under prescribed circumstances.

Judy Proctor and Abigail Roth

Ms. Proctor and Ms. Roth support and also strongly ask you to add another provision to this bill, to prevent the worst speeders on our roads from continuing to put others at risk, Intelligent Speed Assists (ISAs) The use was studied in CT last year and endorsed. Please follow the lead of other jurisdictions like Virginia, Washington state, and Washington D.C., that have enacted sensible legislation which prevents repeat offender speeders from continuing to put others at risk on our roads, without taking away their ability to drive to work, medical appointments, and other places they need to go.

Alec Slatky, Managing Director of Public-Government affairs, AAA NE

AAA supports updating Connecticut's distracted driving law, noting the last major revision was in 2013, when only 56% of U.S. adults owned smartphones. Smartphone use has since expanded to include activities like watching videos and scrolling social media. AAA reports 97% of drivers say social media use while driving is extremely dangerous, yet over 10% admit doing it in the past month, and only 31% believe they would be caught. AAA supports HB 5463 to broaden enforcement against dangerous handheld phone use.

Additionally, fourteen additional residents submitted testimony in support

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None expressed.

Reported by: Cindy Panioto

Date: 3/26/26