

Judiciary Committee

JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No: SB-484 / [Bill Status](#) / [Public Hearing Testimony](#)

Title: AN ACT CONCERNING DISTRACTED DRIVING AND THE SAFE OPERATION OF A MOTOR VEHICLE IN A HIGHWAY WORK ZONE.

Vote Date: 3/24/2026

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 3/18/2026

File No.: 591

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Judiciary Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill expands the devices prohibited under 14-296aa and adds use of a prohibited device in a work zone to the reckless driving per se conduct. Additionally, it clarifies that a violator will not be charged under both statutes and updates the mobile device statute to include a "Video Converter" and bans the sale of these devices.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Garrett Eucalitto, Commissioner, CT Department of Transportation (DOT):

Commissioner Eucalitto supports the legislation because it updates Connecticut's distracted driving law to address new technology and strengthens protections for highway work zones. He emphasizes the addition of video converters that allow drivers to stream videos on dashboard screens while a vehicle is in motion, and argues it closes a technological loophole that undermines existing hands-free laws and deters dangerous behavior. He notes the Department also supports making distracted driving in a highway work zone a per se reckless driving violation, as distracted driving contributes to thousands of crashes, injuries, and fatalities in Connecticut and poses a heightened risk to roadway workers.

Division of Criminal Justice: The Division of Criminal Justice (DCJ) supports the legislation because it seeks to improve roadway safety by reducing distracted driving, lowering motor vehicle accidents and fatalities, and protecting workers in highway work zones. The Division agrees with the DOT, that distracted driving, particularly in work zones, is a serious safety issue. They believe the bill promotes safer driving practices and important public policy goals, but recommend minor drafting revisions.

Ronnell Higgins, Commissioner, Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP): Commissioner Higgins supports the legislation because distracted driving continues to pose a serious threat to public safety and contributes to preventable roadway crashes, injuries, and fatalities. He explains that clearer statutory language defining distracted driving, particularly regarding emerging technologies such as video displays and device-linked infotainment systems, would assist law enforcement in consistently enforcing traffic laws and educating drivers. DESPP urges passage of the bill as a step toward reducing distracted driving and improving safety for all roadway users.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Testimony of the Insurance Association of Connecticut, the American Property and Casualty Insurance Association, and the National Association of Mutual Insurance Companies

Kristina Baldwin, Esq. Eric George, Esq. Sean McLaughlin

The **Insurance Association of Connecticut (IAC), the American Property and Casualty Insurance Association (APCIA), and the National Association of Mutual Insurance Companies (NAMIC)** support the bill because it strengthens Connecticut's distracted driving laws by clarifying that watching video while driving constitutes distracted driving and designates distracted driving in a highway work zone as reckless driving. They note that distracted driving is a major cause of crashes in Connecticut and that work zones pose heightened risks to motorists and roadway workers, so stronger penalties would deter dangerous behavior and help reduce accidents, injuries, and fatalities.

Catherine Chase, President, Advocates for Highway & Auto Safety: Catherine Chase supports the bill because it would strengthen Connecticut's distracted driving law by prohibiting the playing of videos on mobile electronic devices in a driver's view and expanding the definition of mobile electronic devices to include video converters. She contends that distracted driving is a major contributor to crashes, deaths, and injuries nationwide, imposes significant economic costs, and is often underreported. Limiting visual, manual, and cognitive distractions will help keep drivers focused on the road and reduce crashes; she furthered that this will be particularly important as smartphone technology and in-vehicle entertainment systems continue to expand.

Corey Geisman, Executive Director, SEIU State Council: Corey Geisman testified in support of the bill because distracted driving contributes to thousands of crashes, injuries, and fatalities in Connecticut each year and existing penalties have not been a sufficient deterrent. He argues that the bill would strengthen highway safety by expanding the definition of distracted driving to address newer technologies and increasing accountability for drivers. He believes that stronger laws can help reduce dangerous driving behavior and better protect roadway workers and the public.

Ed Hawthorne, President of the Connecticut AFL-CIO: Ed Hawthorne supports the legislation because it would help protect DOT highway maintainers and other roadway workers from the dangers posed by distracted drivers. He notes that workers who maintain and repair state roads face significant risks when motorists are distracted by mobile devices

and in-vehicle screens. He believes the bill will help deter dangerous behavior and improve safety for both workers and the traveling public.

Testimony of AAA Northeast and AAA Club Alliance:

Alec Slatky

Tracy Noble

AAA Club Alliance and AAA Northeast submitted testimony in support of the bill because it would strengthen Connecticut's distracted driving laws by prohibiting watching videos while driving and by designating distracted driving in highway work zones as reckless driving. They stress that distracted driving remains a widespread and underreported cause of crashes and that the growth of smartphone use, and in-vehicle technology have created new forms of distraction not fully addressed by existing law. Updating the statute will help deter dangerous behavior and improve roadway safety. They added that the law could be further strengthened by prohibiting drivers from holding phones while operating a vehicle.

Nate Brown, Business Manager/President, IUOE Local 478: He supports the bill because distracted driving poses a danger to workers who build and maintain Connecticut's highways and infrastructure. He argues that construction and transportation workers face significant safety risks in highway work zones and believes that elevating distracted driving in work zones to a reckless driving offense would help deter dangerous behavior and better protect workers performing critical infrastructure projects across the state.

Carl Chisem, President of the Connecticut Employees Union Independent (SEIU Local 511): Carl Chisem supports the bill, stating that distracted driving and work zone crashes remain significant safety concerns in Connecticut, and existing measures, such as work zone speed cameras, cannot be deployed everywhere. He believes stronger penalties for distracted driving in work zones are necessary to improve safety and worker protections.

Donald Shubert, President of the Connecticut Construction Industries Association (CCIA): Donald Shubert supports the legislation, stating that workers often perform their duties close to active traffic in environments with shifting lanes, reduced visibility, and heavy equipment; this makes driver attentiveness especially critical. He believes designating distracted driving in a work zone as reckless driving would strengthen deterrence, provide law enforcement with better enforcement tools. It would also help reduce crashes, injuries, and fatalities affecting both workers and motorists.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None expressed.

Reported by: Justin Lamoureux

Date: March 27, 2026