

Legislative History for Connecticut Act

PA 14-221

SB430

House	7074-7079	6
Senate	1840-1844, 1885-1886	7
<u>Public Safety</u>	<u>610-620, 738-742</u>	<u>16</u>
		29

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**CONNECTICUT
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE**

**PROCEEDINGS
2014**

**VOL.57
PART 21
6912 – 7260**

Good evening, Mr. Speaker. I'm sorry for the confusion. We're about to set up our third consent calendar for the evening, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Please proceed, sir.

REP. ARESIMOWICZ (30th):

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that -- I would like to move the following items to the Consent Calendar, all of which are in concurrence with the Senate.

Senate Bill 293, House Calendar Number 539 as amended by Senate "A"; Calendar Number 321; Calendar 486 as amended by Senate "A"; Calendar 542 as amended by Senate "A"; Calendar 540 as amended by Senate "A"; Calendar 507 as amended by Senate "A"; Calendar 411 as amended by Senate "A"; Calendar 472 as amended by Senate "A"; Calendar 314; Calendar 132 as amended by Senate "A"; Calendar 116 as amended by Senate "A"; Calendar 541 as amended by Senate "A" and Senate "B".

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Aresimowicz, I believe that a couple of the bills that you called were actually Senate calendar numbers, not House calendar numbers. So I believe the Clerk knows what you're intending, he

mhr/md/ch/cd/gm
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may -- with your indulgence, I was going to ask him
to, perhaps, offer the correction.

REP. ARESIMOWICZ (30th):

Mr. Speaker, maybe for clarification, I'll go
through the bill numbers very quickly.

It being Senate Bill 29 --

REP. CAFERO (142nd):

Mr. Speaker -- excuse me, Mr. Speaker. Is this
the appropriate time for one to object to all the
items on the Consent Calendar?

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

It would be.

REP. CAFERO (142nd):

I will object to all the items on the Consent
Calendar. I would respectfully request that we talk.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Thank you, sir.

With that objection, we will suspend action on
the Consent Calendar so that the Minority and Majority
Leader may talk.

[Pause.]

REP. ARESIMOWICZ (30th):

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I -- just to clarify, I'm going to run through the bill number and the calendar number.

It would be Senate Bill 293, which is Calendar 545; Senate Bill 429, which is Calendar 539; Senate Bill 115, which is Calendar 321; Senate Bill 203, which is Calendar 486; Senate Bill 71, which is Calendar 542; Senate Bill 447, which is Calendar 540; Senate Bill 61, which is Calendar 507; Senate Bill 75, which is Calendar 411; Senate Bill 321, which is Calendar 472; Senate Bill 66, which is Calendar 314; Senate Bill 178, which is Calendar 495; Senate Bill 430, which is Calendar Number 489; and Senate Bill 425, which is Calendar 51 -- 541.

And I move adoption of the Consent Calendar.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Mr. Clerk, does that match your listing of the calendar numbers?

THE CLERK:

430, Mr. Majority Leader, Senate Bill 430 is calendar what?

REP. ARESIMOWICZ (30th):

489.

THE CLERK:

Yes. It does, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

And, Mr. Majority Leader, could you also indicate -- I'm sorry to have to delay this for a second, but according to my notes, all of those -- well, most of those are adopted -- or amended by Senate "A"? If you could just --

REP. ARESIMOWICZ (30th):

Correct, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

specify --

REP. ARESIMOWICZ (30th):

Except the first and the last, sir. The last one being Senate "A" and "B," sir.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Thank you. As long as we're clear about the amendments that have been adopted in the Senate.

REP. ARESIMOWICZ (30th):

Correct, Mr. Speaker. And I move passage of the bills on today's Consent Calendar Number 3.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

The question before the Chamber is adoption of the Consent Calendar Number 3?

Staff and guests please come to the well of the House. Members take your seats. The machine will be open.

THE CLERK:

The House is voting on Consent Calendar Number 3.

The House is voting by roll. Will members please return to the chamber immediately.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Have all the members voted? Have all the members voted?

Take your time, Representative Boukus.

Would members please check the board to make sure your vote is properly cast. If all the members have voted, the machine will be locked and the Clerk will take a tally.

Will the Clerk please announce the tally.

THE CLERK:

Consent number -- Consent Calendar Number 3

Total Number Voting	147
Necessary for Passage	74
Those voting Yea	147
Those voting Nay	0
Those absent and not voting	4

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

The Consent Calendar is passed.

Will the Clerk please call Calendar 506?

THE CLERK:

Calendar 506, on page 25, favorable report of the joint standing committee on Appropriations. Senate

Bill 55, AN ACT CONCERNING COMPLAINTS THAT ALLEGED MISCONDUCT BY LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY PERSONNEL.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Representative Fox.

REP. FOX (146th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move for the acceptance of the joint committee's favorable report and passage of the bill.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Question's on acceptance of the joint committee's favorable report and passage of the bill.

Will you remark, sir?

REP. FOX (146th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Clerk has an amendment, LCO Number 4583. I'd ask that it be called, and I be allowed to summarize.

SPEAKER SHARKEY:

Will the Clerk please call LCO 4583, which has been previously designated Senate Amendment "A."

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And I would certainly urge everybody to support this initiative. Thank you.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you.

Will you remark? Will you remark?

If not, Senator Ayala.

SENATOR AYALA:

Thank you, Madam President.

I -- I, too, want to thank the ranking Chair on Aging. Senator Kelly is a great guide on issues that we deal in this Committee. And if there is no objection, I'd like to place this item on the Consent Calendar.

THE CHAIR:

Seeing no objection, seeing no objection, so ordered, sir.

Senator Looney.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Thank you, Madam President.

Madam President, if the Clerk would call as the next item Calendar page 31, Calendar 116, Senate Bill 430.

THE CHAIR:

Mr. Clerk.

THE CLERK:

On page 31, Calendar 116, substitute for Senate Bill Number 430, AN ACT CONCERNING THE OPERATION OF EMERGENCY VEHICLES, Favorable Report of the Committee on Public Safety. There are amendments.

THE CHAIR:

Good evening, Senator Hartley.

SENATOR HARTLEY:

Good evening to you, Madam President. I move acceptance of the Joint Committee's Favorable Report, madam, and passage of the bill.

THE CHAIR:

Motion is on acceptance and passage.

Will you remark, ma'am?

SENATOR HARTLEY:

Yes, indeed, Madam President. They're -- the Clerk is in possession of LCO 4744. I would ask that the Clerk please call and that I might be granted leave to summarize, madam.

THE CHAIR:

Mr. Clerk.

THE CLERK:

LCO Number 4744, Senate "A", offered by Senators
Hartley, Kane, et. al.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Hartley.

SENATOR HARTLEY:

Thank you, Madam President.

I move adoption.

THE CHAIR:

Motion is on adoption. Will you remark, ma'am?

SENATOR HARTLEY:

Yes, indeed. Madam President, this is a strike all amendment. It is for the purpose of clarifying our public safety statutes governing emergency vehicles, which come upon a school bus with flashing lights.

It essentially came from testimony presented before our Committee in the instance of two different statutes, which really needed to be related to each other. And we had an instance where a school bus was disembarking; an emergency vehicle came upon that.

And, under one section in this statute, emergency vehicles are required to slow down and proceed appropriately. On another part of our statute, we have a requirement where emergency vehicles that come upon a school bus with flashing lights must stop and proceed only when those flashing lights are no longer flashing.

This amendment, Madam President, clarifies that an emergency vehicle coming upon a school bus with flashing lights must stop, but can proceed when they determine that there is no possible endangerment of life or property. And it further clarifies the fact that the emergency vehicle, once it has stopped and determined that there is no danger of person or property, may continue and not have to wait until the flashing lights are no longer flashing.

I move adoption, madam.

THE CHAIR:

Will you remark further? Will you remark further?
Seeing none, I guess I'll try your -- Senator -- no.
I will try your minds on Senate "A". All those in favor, please say Aye.

SENATORS:

Aye.

THE CHAIR:

Opposed?

Senate "A" is adopted. Will you remark further? Will you remark further? Senator Kane.

SENATOR KANE:

Thank you, Madam President, and good evening.

THE CHAIR:

Good evening, sir. It's still your birthday.

SENATOR KANE:

It's still my birthday. That's right. We got a couple of hours left. Thank you, Madam President.

I rise in support of this bill. I want to thank Senator Hartley, the Chair of the Public Safety Committee and, of course, Senator Guglielmo, the ranking member of the Public Safety Committee.

As Senator Hartley stated, this came from an incident that took place in -- in a town that we share, in which a very troubling and possibly dangerous situation was thankfully averted by the keenness the school bus driver and the police officers involved. And certainly, the student that is elementary grade was able to realize the harm and danger of the traffic situation that was taking place.

So this bill will go a long way in clarifying a lot of information that we needed to clarify in regards to situations like this. Let's hope these situations don't occur very often and I'm sure they won't.

But at the same time, putting this in statute will really make the constituents that we represent, including, obviously, our -- our children, our grandchildren, much safer in their everyday lives, and especially when it comes to them attending schools.

So I appreciate Senator Hartley and Senator Guglielmo for their work on this legislation and look forward to its passage. Thank you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you. Will you remark? Will you remark? If not, Senator Hartley.

SENATOR HARTLEY:

Yes. Thank you, Madam President.

And if there is no objection, I would ask that this be on the Consent Calendar, madam.

THE CHAIR:

Seeing no objection, so ordered, ma'am.

Senator Looney.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Thank you, Madam President.

Madam President, if the Clerk would call as the next two items, first Calendar page 35, Calendar 205, Senate Bill 330, and then, Calendar page 38, Calendar 280, Senate Bill 312.

THE CHAIR:

Mr. Clerk.

THE CLERK:

On page 35, Calendar 205, substitute for Senate Bill Number 330, AN ACT CONCERNING THE BOARD OF REGENTS, Favorable Report of the Committee on Higher Education.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Cassano, good evening.

SENATOR CASSANO:

Good evening.

THE CHAIR:

Would you like to stand at ease for a moment, Senator?

On page five, Calendar 295, Senate Bill 445.

On page nine, Calendar 342, House Bill 5098.

And on page 10, Calendar 343, House Bill 5259.

On page 13, Calendar 404, Senate Bill 456.

Page 14, Calendar 408, Senate Bill 489.

On page 16, Calendar 430, House Bill 5285.

On page 18, Calendar 439, House Bill 5540.

On page 26, Calendar 497, House Bill 5081.

And on page 29, Calendar 511, House Bill 5146.

Page 30, Calendar 53, Senate Bill 203, and Calendar 95, Senate Bill 176.

On page 31, Calendar 116, Senate Bill 430.

Page 38, Calendar 280, Senate Bill 312.

And on page 41, Calendar 395, Senate 104.

THE CHAIR:

I guess that's all it. Okay.

Mr. Clerk, will you please open the machines and -- I'll open the machines. You call for a roll call vote.

THE CLERK:

Immediate roll call is ordered in the Senate on today's Consent Calendar. Immediate roll call ordered in the Senate.

THE CHAIR:

If all members have voted, if all members have voted, the machine will be closed.

Mr. Clerk, will you call the tally.

THE CLERK:

On today's Consent Calendar.
Total number voting 35
Those voting Yea 35
Those voting Nay 0
Absent and not voting 1

THE CHAIR:

The Consent Calendar passes. Senator Looney.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Thank you, Madam President.

Madam President, before concluding today's session, would yield the floor to members who may wish to announce Committee meetings or for other points of personal privilege.

THE CHAIR:

Are there points of personal privilege? Senator Fasano.

SENATOR FASANO:

Thank you, Madam President.

Madam President, while I enjoyed being at the circle today, I'd like to take this opportunity to wish my wife a very happy birthday today.

THE CHAIR:

Oh my goodness.

SENATOR FASANO:

I missed the birthday dinner, but it -- I can't think of another group to spend it with other than my wife. So happy birthday to my wife.

THE CHAIR:

**JOINT
STANDING
COMMITTEE
HEARINGS**

**PUBLIC
SAFETY
PART 2
382 – 761**

2014

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rc/gbr PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

March 11, 2014
9:30 A.M.

-- in your position here, and I think we need to send a message. I think that this kind of gamesmanship will not be tolerated in our -- in our state, and so, but that's what I wanted to say. Thank you.

SENATOR HARTLEY: Thank you, Representative Mikutel. I appreciate it.

Christine, thank you for your time in -- in being here, and your work.

CHRISTINE RAPILLO: Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

SENATOR HARTLEY: Absolutely.

So we would like to move on to Denise Belmont, please. And Denise, did you want to come forward with Julia, and with Billy Jo? Yeah, go ahead. Yep, yes -- and you can take either chair on either side, either of them. And they can bring it over to the desk where you are. Just wheel it over. That's why we've got wheels on them. Yeah.

DENISE BELMONT: Good afternoon, Senator Hartley (inaudible.)

SENATOR HARTLEY: Is your mic on? Make sure that -- yeah, there you go.

DENISE BELMONT: Now it is. Thank you. My name is Denise Belmont and I am from Middlebury, Connecticut. As a concerned parent, I am here

SB430

today to give my support to Bill 430, AN ACT CONCERNING EMERGENCY SERVICE PERSONNEL.

On January 29th of this year, my nine-year-old daughter was almost hit by a police car as she was getting off her school bus and crossing the street. The police car, which was responding to an emergency call, came from behind the bus, which was already stopped, and was passing the bus on the left at the same time my daughter was crossing the street.

I am thankful our bus driver is observant and was able to blow her horn in time for my -- for my daughter to stop crossing. Had she not, my daughter would have been struck by the police car.

I was shocked to learn that emergency vehicles do not have to stop for the flashing lights of a school bus when en route to an emergency call. The flashing lights of the school bus mean one thing: a child is getting on or getting off of a school bus. And I am in support of any addition to the current law that would require all emergency vehicles to come to a stop before passing a school bus that has its flashing red signal lights already engaged. This change would ensure that the driver of any emergency vehicle is aware of all children that are off the bus. How could the driver of any emergency vehicle know how many children have gotten off that bus?

I realize time is of the essence when emergency vehicles are en route to a call, but not taking

the few seconds to stop and know where all children are before proceeding through a school bus's flashing lights could lead to a child accidentally being hit, and then the emergency responder would never be able to make it to their call.

I've taken the time to speak with a few different types of emergency responders. It was interesting to learn that fire fighters, ambulance employees -- they are taught that they do stop for the flashing lights of the -- of the school bus.

I am grateful to Middlebury Chief of Police, Richard Wildman, who did take the time to speak with me the day after the incident. He listened to my concerns. He affirms that yes, this is the law, that they do not have to stop for the signals of a school bus, but he did tell me that if I have concerns with this law that I have the right to try and change it, and that is why I'm here before you.

I feel lucky that the incident was just a close call as I can never replace my daughter. If this proposed addition to the current law can just prevent one child from accidentally being struck by a vehicle, I think it is well worth it. Thank you.

SENATOR HARTLEY: Denise, thanks for being with us here today, and Julia, too, and of course, Billy Jo. I would like to defer to my colleague, Representative (inaudible.)

REP. VERRENGIA: Denise, thank you for your testimony and bringing your daughter here. You probably don't know this, but I'm a -- I'm a local police officer and have been one for the past 25 years, and quite frankly, I never ran into this situation. Common sense would tell me to slow down and stop and check to make sure it is safe, just like police officers and emergency personnel are supposed to do when coming up to any red light. So the fact that you brought it to this committee is a great idea, and I think you're going to -- to make a difference in this area, and I'm hopeful that someday soon that this actually becomes a law. So thank you very much.

DENISE BELMONT: Thank you.

SENATOR HARTLEY: Thank you, Representative Verrengia.

Representative Orange.

REP. ORANGE: Thank you. Thank you for coming and sharing your story with us. I didn't realize this either, and as Representative Verrengia, who is a police officer in one of our towns in Connecticut, he would use common sense -- the common sense approach, but sometimes whether it be police, or fire, or EMS, sometimes their adrenaline is going so fast that they might not use common sense. And I commend you for bringing this to our attention, and so that we can correct the law, because as it stands now, emergency vehicles, when they come to red lights and stop signs are supposed to stop. So

if there is a, you know, an accident or whatever as they're proceeding through, if they didn't stop, it's -- it's on them basically.

So this is common sense and it's common sense legislation actually, so hopefully we can get this through for you this year. And it -- it takes people like you from the public to bring your stories to the Legislators to introduce them to the committees' cogence so that we can correct things such as this, and I'm so happy that your daughter is fine and well.

DENISE BELMONT: I am, too.

SENATOR HARTLEY: Yeah, and I'm happy you're fine and well, because that must have been quite an ordeal for you as well.

DENISE BELMONT: Yeah, and I actually think it was more for the bus driver.

SENATOR HARTLEY: Yes, oh yeah, absolutely.

DENISE BELMONT: Watching it unfold --

SENATOR HARTLEY: Absolutely.

DENISE BELMONT: -- and not being able to do anything.

SENATOR HARTLEY: Right.

DENISE BELMONT: And everyone, you know, any parent I speak to, this is a shock. The only people it's not a shock to, it seems to be, is police

officers. And you would think it's common sense, but common sense isn't so common anymore.

SENATOR HARTLEY: Uh-huh. You're right Thank you for coming.

DENISE BELMONT: Sure.

SENATOR HARTLEY: Thank you. Are there further comments from members of the committee?

Billy Jo, did you -- I noticed you submitted testimony to us.

BILLY JO VINCENT: Yes.

SENATOR HARTLEY: Would you like to give us your testimony? Sure.

BILLY JO VINCENT: Sure. Madam Chair and Members of the Committee, my name is Billy Jo Vincent from Middlebury, Connecticut. I am here in support of change to Bill 430, which is AN ACT CONCERNING EMERGENCY SERVICE PERSONNEL.

I am a school bus driver for the children of Region 15. On Wednesday, January 29th of this year, I was taking elementary school children home from school when my red SOS lights were ran by a police officer on his way to a call.

I am positive the officer slowed when driving through my lights which indicates to me that he saw my lights in time. It is my belief that the one person you should never have to worry

about running school bus lights is an emergency vehicle. The child was already off the bus and halfway across the street when I saw the officer coming up on the left side of my bus. I blew my horn; thankfully the child stopped, knowing that this meant danger. The child was able to continue crossing, both hurriedly and startled.

I am left to wonder, did this officer use due regard for the safety of all others, and was this a true emergency since there was already another officer and ambulance on scene.

Collisions are the leading cause of injury, death, and legal liability to emergency responders in our country. The lights of a school bus should mean one thing: children are entering or exiting the bus, and children are unpredictable. Any bus driver would tell you, it's very frightening to sit in that seat and not be able to stop a car that's not going to stop. People think that it's buses crashing that endanger their children. It's not. Statistically the most dangerous part of your child's day is getting on and off the bus. No one other than the bus driver knows how many children got off at a stop, or how many crossed.

I understand the few extra seconds it takes emergency responders to get to the scene of a call after stopping for a school bus with lights engaged is crucial, but not worth the preventable death of a child. Many municipalities including fire and ambulance

have already made it their standard procedure to wait for some sort of response from the bus driver letting them know all children are accounted for and it is safe for them to proceed. If they don't wait and something happens to a child, they are no longer going to be able to respond to the original call because they have now created an emergency and potential tragedy. Now the responder is part of an accident, and the original emergency waits for the next closest responder. Seconds turn to minutes at best.

It is everyone's responsibility to keep our children safe. Together -- if we work together, we can make all the difference.

Thank you for your time and considering in this matter.

SENATOR HARTLEY: Billy Jo, also thank you, because I know you've all been sitting here very patiently for about some three hours or so.

You are absolutely right when you talk about the fact that putting your child on a school bus is a -- is a very concerning event. However, school districts being what they are right now, kids do not walk to school and school buses is the modality by which we get our kids to -- to schools. So it's about then doing this in the safest manner.

I -- I know that when my kids -- when it came time for them to have to be transported to school, my greatest fear was putting my

daughter on the bus. She was a complete space shot. Some would say that wasn't a surprise. Thank you. But she was, and so I had an older son, and so what then happened was I -- because I was -- I had witnessed it once, and that was enough to convince me that I was not going to have a productive day knowing that she was getting off the bus somewhere. So I employed something called Kids' Coach which was a teal - a bright teal-colored minibus which my children say they have been traumatized from ever since that they had a ride on this with the big sign that said Kids' Coach on the side of it. When he was in seventh or eighth grade they would be -- they would have to meet the Kids' Coach behind the bushes or whatever. Nonetheless, they took Kids' Coach and they have been traumatized the rest of their life.

But the truth is that I picture in my mind the situation that you brought to us here and -- and a lot of others like that. What is your protocol? So you're at the stop; you -- you stop; you put the arm out; you put the lights on. Do you wait a certain number of -- what happens then?

BILLY JO VINCENT: As the child gets off the bus, after it's secured, I look to make sure there's no oncoming traffic or traffic coming from behind me. The child gets off, walks to the end of the safety stick that -- that keeps them in my line of sight to cross. I check again to make sure there's no traffic coming, and then I nod my head to have them cross. And that is what -- what had happened that day, and for

some reason, something -- when she got to the corner of my bus, I don't know if it was lights but something caught my eye and I knew to blow the horn. And then I looked, and the cop was right there at my window.

SENATOR HARTLEY: And so, of course, when you blew the horn, you must have totally startled Julia, which could sometimes have the effect of putting you into --

BILLY JO VINCENT: She could have started.

SENATOR HARTLEY: Yeah, you know, the wrong -- yes, Julia?

On the mic -- just, all you have to do.

JULIA BELMONT: A couple -- I think a couple of years ago, when I was getting on the bus, a lady came from this way when my bus was over here, and she blew her horn and I stepped back, so I knew what to do when she blew the horn.

SENATOR HARTLEY: So that served you well, because in that instance someone could panic and, you know, it's that old case of someone looking for the brake and they hit the gas. So anyway, we're -- thank you very much for, you know, bringing this to our attention, and for being with us today, and Julia for participating in State Government. So maybe you'll write a history paper about this.

Are there further questions from Committee Members?

If not, thank you so much for being with us.

DENISE BELMONT: Thank you.

SENATOR HARTLEY: We would now like to invite -- no, it looks like we're done -- Daryl Finizio, the Mayor of New London. Thank you, also, for staying with us. We've been reading about you, Daryl.

MAYOR DARYL FINIZIO: Oh, all good things, I'm sure.

Thank you, Senator Hartley, and Representative Dargan. I appreciate the opportunity to address you and the Members of the Committee, although I know I cannot do as good a job as Julia just did, but I will make my best effort.

I join my colleagues, the First Selectmen of East Lyme and Waterford in voicing my support for Bill 5531. I will not add to the very good points that they have already raised, but merely give you a little more context to what we are doing.

The City of New London is only 6.46 square miles of land area. We are only approximately one mile wide. On a daily basis, if an individual is picked up in East Lyme with a medical condition, they are brought to L and M Hospital in New London. If there is a fire in Waterford, New London fire departments are responding alongside Waterford fire departments at the fire scene in Waterford.



State of Connecticut

SENATE

STATE CAPITOL
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106-1591

SENATOR ROBERT J. KANE
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**DEPUTY MINORITY LEADER PRO TEMPORE AND
CAUCUS CHAIRMAN FOR POLICY**

**RANKING MEMBER
APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE**

**MEMBER
PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE
REGULATIONS REVIEW COMMITTEE**

Dear Senator Hartley, Representative Dargan, Senator Guglielmo, Representative Giegler and the distinguished members of the Public Safety and Security Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to testify before you today in support of Senate Bill No. 430 AN ACT CONCERNING EMERGENCY SERVICE PERSONNEL.

This proposal was brought to my attention by a resident of Middlebury, a town which Senator Hartley and I both represent. An incident occurred where a police officer responding to a call coincided with a school bus dropping off a child after school. The officer slowed down – as required by current law – and no one was hurt, but this does seem to illustrate a potential weakness in our motor vehicle laws. Senate Bill 430 is a step towards addressing this weakness.

Current law allows the operator of an emergency vehicle to disregard stop signs and red lights, et cetera, so long as they do not put the lives of others at risk. In addition, current law does not distinguish between a stop sign at an intersection and the stop sign on a bus signaling that a child is crossing the road. I have no problem with emergency vehicles disregarding stop signs and red lights, but I believe that any emergency vehicle should at least come to a brief stop when passing a school bus where children could be in the roadway, which is what S.B. 430 would require.

Senate Bill 430 would only affect a very small percentage of emergency responses, but I believe it could avoid a tragedy. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I am happy to answer any questions.

Rob Kane
Deputy Minority Leader Pro Tempore

(11)

Testimony in Support of Bill 430, An Act Concerning Emergency Service Personnel

Public Safety and Security Committee

Submitted by Denise Belmont

March 11, 2014

Good Morning Senator Hartley and members of the Public Safety & Security Committee My name is Denise Belmont, and I live in Middlebury, Connecticut As a concerned parent, I am here to give my support for Bill 430, An Act Concerning Emergency Service Personnel

On January 29, 2014 my 9 year old daughter was almost hit by a police car as she was getting off her school bus and crossing the street The police car, which was responding to an emergency call, came from behind the bus and was passing the already stopped school bus on the left At the same time, my daughter was crossing the street I am very thankful that our bus driver is observant and was able to blow her horn in time for my daughter to stop crossing, had she not, my daughter would have been struck by the police car

I was shocked to learn that emergency vehicles DO NOT have to stop for the flashing lights of a school bus when in route to an emergency call

The flashing lights of a school bus mean one thing- a child is getting on or off a bus I am in support of any addition being made to the existing law that would require all emergency vehicles to come to a stop before passing a school bus that has its flashing red signal lights already engaged This change would ensure that the driver any emergency vehicle is aware of the locations of all children that are off the bus before proceeding through How could the driver of any emergency vehicle possibly know how many children could be off the bus at that moment?

I realize that time is of the essence when emergency vehicles are in route to a call, but not taking the few seconds to stop & know where all children are before proceeding through a school bus's flashing lights could lead to a child accidentally being hit And then, that emergency responder would never make it to their call

I have taken the time to speak with a few different types of emergency responders It was interesting to learn that ambulance employees and fire fighters are taught that they DO have to stop before proceeding through the flashing lights of a school bus I was told emergency responders are not supposed to create more emergencies while responding to a call I think the law needs to be reflective of these practices that some emergency personnel already follow

I am grateful to Middlebury's Chief of Police, Richard Wildman, who took the time to speak with me the day after this incident took place. He listened to my concerns, and affirmed that the present law DOES NOT require police to stop for school bus signals when in route to an emergency call. But, he did suggest that if I have concerns with the current law, that I have the right to try and change it. And that is why I am here today, to give my support for the improvement of a law that is already in place, to make this law a safer law.

It is unacceptable that any vehicle could be allowed to "slow" and proceed through the signal lights of a school bus. "Slow" is a very subjective term. Did the police officer "slow" as he passed my daughter's school bus? I am sure he did. 50mph to 30mph is slowing. But if he was going slow enough that he could have stopped, then why didn't he stop when he saw my daughter was already in the road and crossing?

I am lucky that this incident was just a close call, as my daughter could never be replaced. If this addition to the current law can prevent just one child from accidentally being struck by a vehicle, it would be well worth the change.

Thank you for the opportunity to give testimony before this committee.

(12)

Madam Chair, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, my name is Billie Jo Vincent from Middlebury, CT and I am here in support of change to bill 430 which is "An act concerning Emergency service personnel." I am a school bus driver for the children of Region 15. On Wednesday January 29th of this year, I was taking elementary school children home from school, when my red SOS lights were ran by a police officer on his way to a call. I am positive that the officer slowed when driving through my lights, which indicates to me that he saw my lights and sign. It is my belief that the one person you should never have to worry about running school bus lights is an emergency vehicle. The child was already off the bus, and halfway across the street when I saw the officer coming up on the left side of my bus. I blew my horn! Thankfully, the child stopped, knowing that this meant danger. ~~The officer also stopped, hearing the horn.~~ So the child was able to continue crossing, both hurriedly and startled. I am left to wonder did this officer use "due regard" for the safety of all others and was this a true emergency, since there was already another officer and an ambulance on scene. Collisions are the leading cause of injury, death and legal liability to emergency responders in our country.

The lights of a school bus should mean one thing, Children are entering or exiting the bus and children are unpredictable. "Any bus driver would tell you, it's very frightening to be sitting in that seat and not able to stop a car that's not going to stop!" People think that it is buses crashing that endanger their children. It's Not! Statistically the most dangerous part of your child's day is getting on and off their bus. No one, other than the bus driver knows how many children get off at a stop or how many cross. I understand the few extra seconds it takes emergency responders to get to the scene of a call after

stopping for a school bus, with lights engaged is crucial, but not worth the preventable death of a child. Many municipalities, including fire and ambulance, have already made it there standard procedure to wait for some sort of response from the bus driver, letting them know all children are accounted for, and it is safe for them to proceed. If they don't wait, and something happens to a child, they are no longer going to be able to respond to the original call because they have now created an emergency and potential tragedy. Now that responder is part of an accident and the original emergency waits for the next closest responder. Seconds turn to minutes, at best.

It is everyone's responsibility to keep our children safe. If we work together, we can make all the difference. Thank you all for your time and consideration in this matter.