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State Victim Advocate

Good morning Senator Maynard, Representative Guerrera and distinguished members of the Transportation Committee. For the record, my name is Natasha Pierre and I am the Victim Advocate for the State of Connecticut. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony concerning:

Proposed House Bill No. 6588, *An Act Concerning Open Containers in Motor Vehicles*

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), there were 276 traffic fatalities in the State of Connecticut in 2013. Of those, 114 (41%), were alcohol related crashes. It can be conservatively projected that the number of surviving family members associated with the 114 deaths is triple that number.

Connecticut is one of only seven states that has not enacted an open container prohibition for passenger in motor vehicles. Studies have shown that such legislation has decreased the number of alcohol related crashes, and further, that they are a deterrent for driving under the influence. Interestingly, the U.S. Department of Transportation conducted a study for the NHTSA, and found, in states with no open container prohibition for passengers, 83.57 percent of residents believe there should be one.

CT has recognized the necessity to address issues relating to distracted driving. Prohibitions are in place for driving while texting, driving while using a cell phone and age and other restrictions for young drivers. Allowing passengers to drink alcohol in a motor vehicle may be the ultimate distraction and temptation for drivers.

Finally, as a result of CT's failure to enact an open container law, three percent (3%) of the state's federal highway funds are transferred from the highway construction budget each year, until a law is passed. We simply can't afford to ignore or put off the issue any longer.

I strongly urge the Committee's favorable report of Proposed House Bill No. 6588. Thank you for consideration of my testimony.

Respectfully submitted,

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