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**Testimony of
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**Submitted to the Illinois Senate
Transportation Subcommittee on Red Light Cameras
Regarding Senate Bill 2466
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Chairperson Sandoval and Vice-Chairperson Sullivan, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Brian Costin, and I am Director of Outreach with the Illinois Policy Institute. We are a nonpartisan research organization dedicated to supporting free market principles and liberty based public policy initiatives. The Institute conducts research and analysis on a variety of matters, including fiscal policy, education, government reform, health care, and transportation. You can learn more about our organization by visiting www.IllinoisPolicy.org.

Where We Stand Today

As of today, there are at least 853 red light cameras in operation in the State of Illinois, and seemingly more are being put up every day.

Many elected officials in Illinois, both on the state and local level, have embraced red light cameras, purportedly as a safety tool. The claim is that the cameras will make intersections safer by reducing accidents, and that any money made from the cameras is merely incidental to the primary focus of making intersections safer.

Sounds innocent enough, but what if cameras did the exact opposite. What if they actually made intersections more dangerous? If so, the entire justification for red light cameras would be eliminated and there would be no choice but to pull the cameras down.

In a survey of the existing studies on red light cameras, there are at least 9 studies¹ that raise significant concerns about red light cameras. Each of these studies reports that red light cameras increase accidents instead of preventing them.

The cause of this increase in accidents stems primarily from the fear of getting a ticket, which causes motorists to radically change their driving behavior. These driving behavior changes include accelerating to avoid being caught by a red light camera to slamming on the break irregularly.

Summary of Traffic Safety Science of Red Light Cameras

A 2008 study by the University of South Floridaⁱⁱ report found that “Comprehensive studies conclude cameras actually increase crashes and injuries, providing a safety argument not to install them.... public policy should avoid conflicts of interest that enhance revenues for government and private interests at the risk of public safety.”

The studies conducted by the Virginia Department of Transportationⁱⁱⁱ, North Carolina A&T University^{iv}, Ontario Ministry of Transportation^v, the Australian Road Research Board^{vi}, and Monash University (Australia)^{vii} cast a serious pall on the claim that red light cameras are effective in reducing accidents.

The companies that operate red light cameras, and the communities that use them, have an invested financial interest in selectively promoting certain red light camera data and ignoring the full body of scientific evidence. For every ticket written, fees can be anywhere from \$15-\$50 for a red light camera company, based on the level of service provided, and the remaining money goes to the government.

Red Speed Illinois and Redflex Traffic Systems, aggressively promote a study conducted by the Center for Transportation Research and Education (CTRE) at Iowa State University that is controversial, to say the least. An article published in Florida Public Health Review^{viii} criticizes the CTRE study for its small sample size of only 3 towns, and for its methodology. Critics allege the CTRE study didn't measure each intersection on a before and after basis and the study “failed to demonstrate a credible safety outcome improvement”.

If any conclusion can be drawn from the totality of red light camera studies it is that they are much more likely to be a public safety menace than a true safety tool. But, with cameras still being put up at an alarming rate, it is quite clear that elected officials are either blissfully ignorant or blatantly ignoring the scientific evidence at hand.

Which raises the obvious question: are red light cameras for safety or revenue?

Sen. Dan Duffy (R-Barrington), who is sponsoring SB-2466, believes that red light cameras are about revenue and not safety. Duffy's claim is backed up by a 2001 National Highway Transportation Safety Administration report entitled “Analysis of Crossing Path Crashes”^{ix}. It revealed an average motorist “could drive a billion miles before being involved in an accident that resulted from a motorist making a rolling stop on a right-hand turn.”

Despite the apparent lack of danger, municipalities are making the vast majority of their money on rolling right-on-red turns instead of the more dangerous straight-through red light running.

In my hometown of Schaumburg, over 10,000 tickets and \$1 million in fines were generated in less than 3 months from a single red light camera enforced intersection. Over 98 percent of the tickets were written for right-on-red violations. A public uproar ensued over the camera. Later it was revealed that the intersection never had a red light running problem to begin with. The intersection had zero accidents caused by red light running in the year prior to installation. After this revelation the camera was quietly removed and plans for 9 additional cameras were canceled.

There are plenty of opportunities to improve intersection safety available to municipalities, and most of are simple low-cost engineering changes to intersections and light timing. Unfortunately, those opportunities are

not money making opportunities for municipalities, and legislative reforms for true traffic safety improvements have been largely been ignored.

Barnet Fagel, a traffic safety researcher with the National Motorists Association, said, “Instead of applying proper safety engineering standards, municipalities are using cameras to profit from their own engineering errors.” Studies, including those by the U.S. House of Representatives^x and the Texas Transportation Institute^{xi}, show that increasing the duration of yellow lights and increasing the “all red” phase to 1-2 seconds can reduce accidents at intersections by 40-80 percent.

Conclusion

Once the safety rhetoric is stripped away, the argument for the continued existence of red light cameras is crumbling. So far, only the Village of Schaumburg has taken the ill-advised cameras down and only then because of vast public outcry.

The overwhelming majority of the science on red light cameras shows red light cameras clearly don't serve the cause of traffic safety, and they should be pulled down quicker than they were put up.

If legislators on the state and local level are interested in promoting the cause of traffic safety they support intersection engineering improvements that have been reliably shown to reduce accidents. Successful demonstrated engineering changes include lengthening the duration of yellow light timing and lengthening the all red phase.

Thank you and I'd be happy to answer any questions.

ⁱ Red Light Camera Studies Roundup “A collection of red light camera studies over the last decade shows red light cameras have serious side-effects.”, The Newspaper, January 2010, <http://www.thenewspaper.com/news/04/430.asp>.

ⁱⁱ University of South Florida, "Red-Light Cameras Increase Crashes, Florida Researchers Find.", College of Public Health , ScienceDaily, 12 March 2008, <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2008/03/080311151159.htm>.

ⁱⁱⁱ Garber, Nicholas J. Ph.D., P.E. “The Impact of Red Light Cameras (Photo-Red Enforcement) on Crashes in Virginia” Virginia Transportation Research Council, June 2007, http://www.virginiadot.org/vtrc/main/online_reports/pdf/07-r2.pdf

^{iv} Burkey, Mark Ph.D. and Obeng, Kofi Ph. D. “Investigation of Crash Risk Reduction Resulting From Red-Light Cameras in Small Urban Areas”, Urban Transit Institute North Carolina Agricultural & Technical State University, July 2004, <http://www.motorists.org/photoenforce/home/crash-risk-reduction-resulting-from-red-light-cameras/>.

^v Synectics Transportation Consultants Inc., “Final Technical Report: Evaluation of the Red Light Camera Enforcement Pilot Project”, Ontario Ministry of Transportation, December 2003, <http://www.motorists.org/photoenforce/2003-ontario.pdf>.

^{vi} Andreassen, D. C. “A long term study of red light cameras and accidents”, Australian Road Research Board, 1995, <http://catalogue.nla.gov.au/Record/781126>.

^{vii} Kent, Sally, Corben, Bruce, Fildes, Brian & Dyte, David, “Red Light Running Behaviour at Red Light Camera and Control Intersections”, Monash University Accident Research Centre, 1995, <http://www.monash.edu.au/muarc/reports/muarc073.html>.

^{viii} Various Authors, “Red Light Running Cameras – Reader Reactions and Authors’ Reply”, Florida Public Health Review, 2008; 5:47-52, <http://www.thenewspaper.com/rlc/docs/2008/fl-orbanreply.pdf>.

^{ix} National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, “Analysis of Crossing Path Crashes”, U.S. Department of Transportation, July 2001, <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/staticfiles/DOT/NHTSA/NRD/Multimedia/PDFs/Crash%20Avoidance/2003/DOTHS809423.pdf>

^x Office of the Majority Leader, “The Red Light Running Crisis Is it Intentional?”, U.S. House of Representatives, May 2001, <http://www.thenewspaper.com/rlc/docs/finalreport.pdf>.

^{xi} Bonneson, James and Zimmerman, Karl, “Development of Guidelines for Identifying and Treating Locations with a Red-Light-Running Problem”, Texas Transportation Institute, The Texas A&M University System, September 2004, <ftp://ftp.dot.state.tx.us/pub/txdot-info/rli/psr/0-4196-s.pdf>.