

HOUSE HOMELAND SECURITY COMMITTEE

DECEMBER 4, 2024

HB 416 OPPONENT TESTIMONY

Chairman Ghanbari, Vice Chairman Plummer, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the House Homeland Security Committee, I am Sharon Montgomery. I have been a traffic safety activist since I was a victim of a fatal distracted driving crash in 2000. I have tried to limit my advocacy to distracted driving and to support and justice for victims of sober drivers. I have, though, followed the many bills to restrict or regulate the use of traffic enforcement cameras.

I have no problem with making sure the cameras are used correctly and fairly and with adequate oversight. What has brought me to a hearing for only the second time for the many camera bills is the fact that the sponsors and some witnesses continue to justify the bills with assumptions, speculations, broad generalizations, opinions, and even incorrect information. I can't let that go unchallenged any longer.

Witnesses use a lot of "it seems," "it appears," "in my opinion," and similar words. These are not good enough when we're talking about large amounts of money and literally life and death situations on our public roads.

The sponsors have always given you a few examples of small towns and villages where they **assume** the cameras are merely to generate revenue and asked you to assume that and also assume those few towns and villages are the rule rather than the exception, with no evidence that they are the rule.

These places are often called "speed traps," implying they lower their speeds and give out tickets just to make money from tickets. Maybe they lower their speeds inside their limits to keep their people safe, just like city speed limits are lower than the highways that lead into them.

At least one of the fees recommended in the bill—the \$5000 monthly calibration fee—was admittedly a speculation on the appropriate amount. Apparently there has been no research into the actual cost. I wonder also if anyone checked with the Dept. of Public Safety to find out if it was able to take on that responsibility.

The incorrect information given to justify regulations that are so restrictive that many cities give up using cameras is that cameras don't enhance safety. The Federal Highway Administration disagrees. It reports that a fixed unit can reduce crashes on urban principal arterials up to 54% and have reduced speeding in New York City school zones during school hours up to 63%! It also reports that speed cameras can reduce crashes upstream and downstream from the camera location. The text in this report varies in size so much that the smaller text is hard to read when scanned so I did not attach it to my testimony but I do have a couple hardcopies for you if you want them.

In the original Guide, it was pointed out that cameras can also protect law enforcement officers in locations where in-person traffic stops are dangerous because of road design or other reasons.

In 2019, the Vision Zero Network endorsed automated speed enforcement as one of the "proved strategies to deter dangerous speeds."

In his sponsor testimony, Rep. Patton contradicted himself. At one point, he stated the presence of a patrol car reminds people to observe the speed limit, implying a camera does not. Later he indicated that drivers would observe the limit if they know cameras are there every day. But then he acknowledged that police can't be everywhere, so wouldn't a sign alerting drivers to the presence of a camera have the same benefit as a patrol car? And the advantage would be that the sign and camera could be there all the time which the patrol car could not—especially in the small villages where the whole police force might be only the chief and one or two officers.

To get the best of both worlds—proper oversight and the known safety benefits, I suggest this bill be allowed to die so that in the next General Assembly, it can be rewritten using facts instead of speculations and assumptions.

The Federal Highway Administration updated its Speed Safety Camera Program Planning and Operations Guide in January of 2023. That would be a good place to start in creating a justifiable, workable new version of this bill. I have attached a summary page of that Guide. I have hardcopies if you want them.

Thank you for hearing a different viewpoint on speed cameras.

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16. Abstract The <i>Speed Safety Camera Program Planning and Operations Guide</i> (Guide) provides an update of the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) 2008 <i>Speed Enforcement Camera Systems Operational Guidelines</i> . Speed safety cameras (SSC), formerly referred to as speed camera enforcement or automated speed enforcement (ASE), is a proven safety tool that jurisdictions may use as part of a comprehensive speed management program to target speeding-related safety problems. The purpose of this Guide is to help jurisdictions plan, deploy, and operate SSC programs to improve safety and maintain program reliability and accountability. SSCs are inherently objective in enforcing speed limits but should be implemented carefully and with significant community input. Responsible public agencies should also maintain strong oversight to ensure the program maximizes the intended benefits to the public. This update places increased emphasis on ideas and considerations for planning in States that lack current authorization for SSC, and highlights recommendations to the States and U.S. DOT from the National Transportation Safety Board. The Guide incorporates updated research and practices from the U.S. and from international jurisdictions, including information on new technologies such as point-to-point (average speed-over-distance) systems. The Guide emphasizes SSC as one component of a comprehensive speed management program to be carefully applied. The Guide provides four new case studies on how five different jurisdictions in the United States have implemented or taken steps toward implementing programs.			
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