

Testimony of Erin Touponse
In Opposition to
HB-7142
Transportation Public Hearing
Legislative Office Building,
Hartford, Connecticut
February 25, 2019

Good Afternoon Senator Leone, Representative Lemar, Senator Martin, Representative Devlin, and members of the Transportation Committee. My name is Erin Touponse and I am the Director of Communication for the Harte Auto Group. We are family owned and operated since 1951. Our first dealership was Harte Chevrolet located in Meriden, CT. We now own two Nissan, two Infiniti, one Volkswagen, one Mitsubishi and several used car lots. We have locations in Hartford, West Haven, Wallingford and Meriden. I personally have been with the group since 2003. We have approximately 350 employees, averaging about 50 - 60 per store.

I am here today to speak in opposition to HB-7142

A December 10, 2018 Hartford Courant article titled *Connecticut Judge Says Tesla Illegally Sold Cars from Greenwich Gallery* reports how our own DMV, and now the superior court (**this case is still pending**), found that Tesla flagrantly ignored our existing law and was found to be illegally selling vehicles without a license. This at the very time that they knowingly were seeking a change in the law to allow them to do so legally. This seems the height of corporate arrogance.

Attached to my testimony I have shared that December 10th article and a few of the other headlines that have given me pause over the last weeks concerning Tesla. I do urge you all to read these reports from many of the nation's most reputable media sources and ask yourself if this is the kind of company, located in the state of California, that you - as our elected representatives - feel compelled to pander to and extend special exemptions from our laws; and most importantly from the direct instate jurisdiction of our regulatory authorities such as the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities, the state Department of Labor, the Department of Consumer Protection's lemon law and advertising rules and other state agencies that protect our citizens, workers and consumers from abuse.

My goodness, in this day and age it's just shocking to hear these reports of abuse from a company's workers and it's upsetting to hear statements by that company's Chairman of the Board that he doesn't respect regulating authorities.

As management, I understand the implications of what it means for a business owner to say that they are cutting jobs. I understand the importance of maintaining inclusive and diverse workforces that feels safe and supported. I also understand that our state's franchise laws are enforced to help support not only dealers, but employees and consumers as well.

What I don't understand is why we would tolerate a company who has maintained a blatant display of disregard for employees, government, and consumers, and afford them special treatment here in Connecticut.

Furthermore, why would Connecticut embrace a company and give them that special treatment when, in fact, they have already broken Connecticut laws.

It is with the utmost respect for our laws, for my fellow employees, for the other dealership owners in the state, and for the future of the auto industry here in Connecticut, that I urge you to not pass HB-7142, the Licensing of New and Used Car Dealers.

Thank you for your time.

New York Times

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/30/business/tesla-factory-racism.html>

The Guardian

<https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2017/jul/05/tesla-sexual-harassment-discrimination-engineer-fired>

Buzz Feed News

<https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/carolineodonovan/musk-slams-union-drive-in-email-to-employees>

New York Times

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/15/business/tesla-model-3-buyers.html>