



## Child Advocates Seek Data on Pedestrian Stops

by Lisa Backus | Aug 27, 2020

**Youth are regularly stopped by police on urban streets but there is no data on whether the stops are motivated by race or if they had a legitimate purpose, according to the Hartford-based Center for Children's Advocacy.**

**The Center tried to amend the state's Alvin Penn Law to include pedestrian stops, but its efforts to get it on the General Assembly's July special session agenda fell short.**

It's not looking good for the September special legislative session either, said Sen. Gary Winfield, D-New Haven, co-chair of the Judiciary Committee. But the issue of youth being stopped by police while on foot is on his radar, Winfield said. "It's a concept that I have been trying to make happen," Winfield said. "But I'm not sure if it's something that's a separate bill of its own during the next full session."

The Alvin W. Penn Racial Profiling Prohibition Act passed in 1999 prohibits police from stopping motorists based on race, age, gender or sexual orientation. In 2012 the legislature made changes to the law requiring police departments to collect and submit all data gathered during traffic stops including the race or ethnicity of the driver.

The data is then analyzed by the Racial Profiling Prohibition Project at Central Connecticut State University's Institute for Municipal and Regional Policy. The results of the analysis have flagged dozens of police departments throughout the state for closer review for possible racial profiling.

The Center for Children's Advocacy wants the same data gathering and analysis for all pedestrian stops by police which tend to disproportionately impact youth under 16 who do not drive, said Samuel Rivera, senior staff attorney for the Racial Justice Project at the Center.

"In the inner city, most kids have no place to go and they are hanging out and getting stopped if they are a particular color," Rivera said. "These kids are just hanging out and have no other outlets. If we had the data as it relates to minorities, we'd be able to see what is happening."

The traffic stop data collected for the Racial Profiling Prohibition Project is centered on drivers – who are all over the age of 16, Rivera said in testimony submitted as legislators were considering sweeping police reforms in late June and early July. There is no comprehensive collection of data on police interactions with young teens, most of which happen on foot since they are too young to drive, he said. **"Racial profiling of Black and brown people is a common problem in Connecticut and across the country," Rivera said in the testimony. "More specifically, youth of color complain about continually getting harassed by police officers while walking down the street or congregating with friends. They detail their negative experiences with law enforcement."**

The inclusion of the pedestrian stop data would provide a more comprehensive picture of racial profiling in the state, according to Rivera. "It shows where there is a problem and where there's not a problem," Rivera said. "It's a win-win and it can be done with an easy fix by amending the existing legislation."

Several other states and large cities already require the pedestrian stop data to be collected including Washington, D.C., Colorado, Milwaukee, and Illinois, Rivera said.

The Center tried without success to get the pedestrian data collection requirement into the police accountability bill that passed in late July. The 65-page bill provides for police reform in several areas including better training in de-escalating incidents, the creation of an independent office to investigate the use of deadly police force and greater transparency by

requiring state police to release all internal affairs investigations, regardless of whether the allegations were substantiated.

The law was passed after the death of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police. His death sparked protests throughout the state and country.

Rivera was hoping to get a second shot at the proposal during the special legislative session slated for September. The 2020 legislative session was halted in March when the coronavirus pandemic hit Connecticut.

Legislators did work on four bills, including the police accountability law, during the two-day July special session. The agenda for a proposed September special legislative session has not been released. Winfield, who was instrumental in crafting the police accountability bill, didn't believe that the pedestrian stop data initiative would be addressed in September. "I'm not sure that's something we can get done during a special session," Winfield said.

**Rivera and the Center are now hoping to utilize eight public listening sessions staged by the Police Transparency and Accountability Task Force to be held in September to get the word out about the need to collect pedestrian stop data.**

**"We are disappointed they didn't do it (in July)," Rivera said. "But we are going to keep pressing."**

*[https://www.ctnewsjunkie.com/archives/entry/20200827\\_child\\_advocates\\_seek\\_data\\_on\\_pedestrian\\_stops/](https://www.ctnewsjunkie.com/archives/entry/20200827_child_advocates_seek_data_on_pedestrian_stops/)*