

**Testimony of Ryder FitzGerald**  
**to**  
**The Joint Committee on Transportation of The Connecticut General Assembly**  
**in opposition to**

**SB1375: AN ACT CONCERNING HIGHWAY, PEDESTRIAN AND CYCLIST SAFETY.**

To the Chairmen and Members of the Transportation Committee: I am Ryder FitzGerald, a lifelong motorcycle enthusiast with well over one hundred thousand miles of motorcycle riding experience.

As a retired engineer (my professional career consisted mostly of designing electronic equipment, largely for the aerospace and military sectors), I prefer decisions to be made based on facts, rather than speculation, guesswork or the downright misinformation spread by people with personal agendas that they are trying to promote. For this reason, I prepared the attached fourteen-year study of the impact of motorcycle helmet laws on public safety.

Many well-meaning but poorly informed people keep pushing motorcycle helmet laws as a means of reducing fatalities and injuries from motorcycle crashes, relying on the repetition of long since debunked hearsay "evidence", rather than facts, to support their position.

The study contained herein compares fatality rates and serious injury rates for all motorcycle-involved crashes, over a fourteen year period, for both Connecticut, which for about forty years has allowed adult motorcyclists to decide for themselves whether or not to use helmets, and New York State, which for the same period has had mandatory helmet use for all motorcyclists. The data is taken from publicly available sources, based on the reports filed by investigating Police Officers.

These two States were chosen partially because I have at various times lived in, and ridden my motorcycles in both States, partially because these States make their statistical crash data readily available through publicly accessible sources, and mostly because these two States are similar with regard to weather conditions, road conditions, and demographics, making any differences in fatality and serious injury rates largely attributable to the difference in helmet laws.

It has been my observation that in Connecticut, approximately 30-40% of all motorcyclists choose to wear helmets, whereas helmet use in New York is essentially 100%, because of the mandatory helmet use law. If helmet use had a significant effect on fatality or serious injury rates, one would expect these rates to be much lower in New York than in Connecticut, but THIS IS NOT THE CASE!

As you can see from the table and charts on the next page, Fatality rates are essentially identical between the two States, whereas Serious Injury rates are actually significantly higher in New York!

This reason alone should be sufficient to require all sensible people to oppose the introduction of new motorcycle helmet use laws, or the increase of the applicability of existing helmet laws.

I respectfully request that you oppose **Section 3(a) of SB1375**, and any other attempts to impose new helmet laws or to increase the applicability of existing helmet laws.

Sincerely,

Ryder FitzGerald, Concerned Citizen

February 23, 2025

## On Helmet Laws and Public Safety

With the new Legislative Session getting under way, it is imperative to get the facts about helmet laws out in the open.

It has been stated, by supporters of helmet laws, that helmet law States have lower Fatality and/or lower Serious Injury rates in motorcycle crashes than a freedom of choice State like Connecticut. They still rely on misinformation, disinformation and falsehoods to try to push their agenda, without any factual data to back up any of their claims.

This falsehood has been propagated by (among others) the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) for more than forty years, but it wasn't true forty years ago, and it still is not true now!

Unfortunately, many Legislators are unaware of these facts, and sometimes act without checking the sources of their "information".

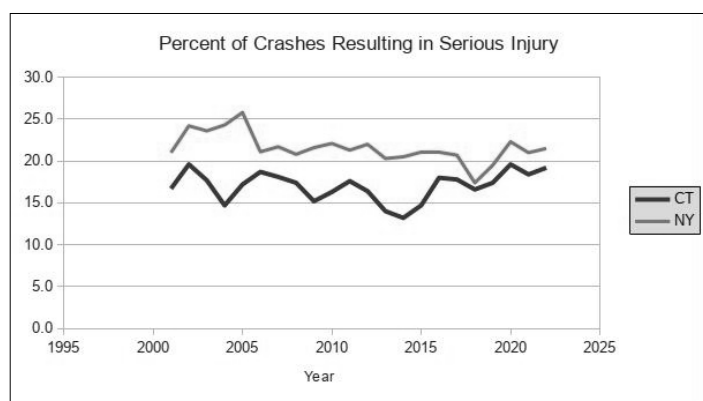
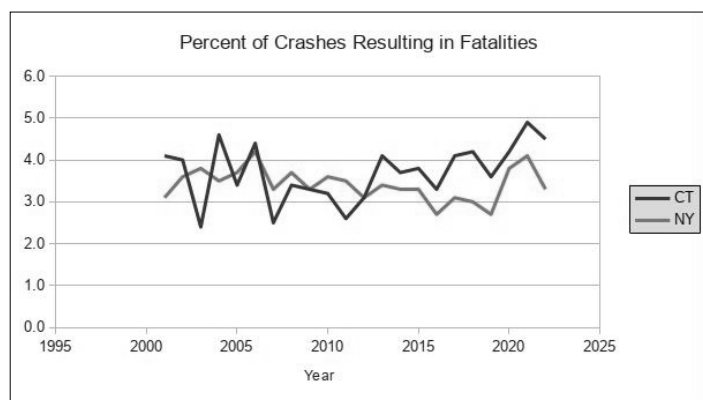
Comparing otherwise-similar States such as New York and Connecticut, which have similar weather conditions, similar infrastructure quality (road conditions), and similar population demographics (such as average educational level), but differ in terms of helmet laws (New York has had mandatory helmet use for all motorcyclists for most of the last half-century while Connecticut has had freedom of choice for adult motorcyclists for most of the same period) shows virtually identical fatality rates: In each State, an average of about 3.55% of all crashes involving motorcycles result in fatal injuries (almost always to the motorcyclist). In some years New York has a slightly higher rate than Connecticut, in other years the opposite, but there is no significant overall difference in any year. **Helmet laws do NOT reduce Fatality rates!**

Furthermore, the percentage of crashes resulting in non-fatal serious injuries, such that the person is not expected to be able to return to normal activities, is considerably higher in New York at 21.6% than in Connecticut at 17.0% average for all years. **Helmet laws do NOT reduce Serious Injuries!**

All data is from publicly available statistics taken from the standard PR-1 crash reports filed by investigating Officers.

### Motorcycle Crashes:

	NY		CT	
	%Fatal	%Serious	%Fatal	%Serious
2001	3.1	21.0	4.1	16.7
2002	3.6	24.2	4.0	19.6
2003	3.8	23.6	2.4	17.7
2004	3.5	24.3	4.6	14.7
2005	3.7	25.8	3.4	17.2
2006	4.2	21.1	4.4	18.7
2007	3.3	21.7	2.5	18.1
2008	3.7	20.8	3.4	17.4
2009	3.3	21.6	3.3	15.2
2010	3.6	22.1	3.2	16.3
2011	3.5	21.3	2.6	17.6
2012	3.1	22.0	3.1	16.4
2013	3.4	20.3	4.1	14.0
2014	3.3	20.5	3.7	13.2
2015	3.3	21.0	3.8	14.7
2016	2.7	21.1	3.3	18.0
2017	3.1	20.7	4.1	17.8
2018	3.0	17.4	4.2	16.6
2019	2.7	19.5	3.6	17.4
2020	3.8	22.3	4.2	19.6
2021	4.1	21.0	4.9	18.4
2022	3.3	21.5	4.5	19.2
Mean:	3.4	21.6	3.7	17.0



Data on Connecticut crashes from CT DOT database at:  
<http://ctcrash.uconn.edu>

Data on New York crashes from:  
<https://dmv.ny.gov/about-dmv/statistical-summaries>