



## Rocky Hill Fire Department

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General Law Committee  
Connecticut General Assembly

RE: Senate Bill 3- ACC Consumer Protection

I request the privilege to testify in opposition to Senate Bill 3 of the 2024 Connecticut Legislative Session. Specifically, Section 4 of the Bill that includes a ban on the purchase of Chinese and other foreign-made drones after October 1, 2024, and the use of Chinese and other foreign-made drones after October 1, 2025.

The Rocky Hill Fire Department, in combination with the Rocky Hill Police Department, operates a drone program using multiple DJI platforms, including the Matrice 300, Mavic 2 Enterprise Advance, and Avata. Each of these platforms has very specific missions within the police and fire industry. In the fire service, a drone equipped with Thermal Imaging can see through smoke and detect heat during a fire, providing critical information to incident commanders to prevent the loss of life and property. In law enforcement situations, a drone can provide access to areas not accessible by Officers, providing imaging and reconnaissance, allowing Police Departments to better organize any actions. Drones are also used to search for missing persons, investigate hazardous materials incidents, and assess damage after severe weather to determine the impact on the community. This is a small sample of the life-saving missions our drones respond to multiple times every month.

The banning of the DJI platform would be detrimental to our program and our ability to protect our community. In addition, banning our DJI platform would be a waste of taxpayer money. Several platforms were investigated during the purchasing process for our drone program. Drone manufacturers from across the globe were considered. The DJI platform was the most capable program costing the least amount of funding on a tight municipal budget. The drones manufactured in the United States were not as capable and significantly more expensive for base model units. In many instances, the Town of Rocky Hill would be required to purchase several drones to achieve the same capabilities as just our Matrice 300 aircraft. In addition, a single US-manufactured aircraft is nearly three times the cost. Fiscal responsibility should be considered when working with a municipal budget.

We understand the security concerns of foreign-made platforms. Some drone platforms communicate with the manufacturer regarding flights performed. However, these concerns can all be mitigated using very simple procedures, and in fact, the DJI platform requires authorizations in many situations our cyber security experts are trying to protect where the United States manufacturers do not require the same level of protection. Rather than connecting a drone through a municipal internet connection, hot spots through Apple iPads can be used to protect local infrastructure. Drones can also be flown with internet connectivity turned off to prevent security threats. A drone is only capable of taking images that are widely available on many mapping programs being used across the United States.

As First Responders, we prefer to purchase American-made products, but those products must be able to provide the solutions we require to do our jobs effectively and efficiently. Until the U.S. market can produce a drone competing with the DJI Platform in capability and cost, we must oppose Senate Bill 3. This bill does not protect our consumers. It places our communities at risk.

As my closing argument, I am providing a picture of a structure fire in Rocky Hill from December 2021. The thermal picture provided by our DJI Matrice 300 was instrumental in saving the structure to the east of the fire building. Showing a heat source in the building prior to ignition allowed the Fire Department to investigate and eliminate any fire before it could start. This structure was the first meeting hall in Rocky Hill and is listed as a historical building.

Sincerely,

Mark Gentile  
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