



**Prepared Remarks**  
**Christopher Bruce, Political Director**  
**American Civil Liberties Union of Georgia**  
**House Motor Vehicles Driver Safety and Service Subcommittee**  
**Wednesday March 17, 2021**  
**3:30PM 515 CLOB**

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Good Afternoon, my name is Christopher Bruce, and I am here on behalf of the American Civil Liberties Union of Georgia and our members and our supporters throughout the state of Georgia. The ACLU of Georgia is a nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting the civil rights and civil liberties of all Georgians. Thank you to this committee for the opportunity to speak to you today on Senate Bill 115.

The ACLU of Georgia is opposed to Senate Bill 115 and today, I'd like to share our concerns with this committee in hopes that you all will keep them in mind when deciding whether or not you will permit this measure to move forward in the legislative process. Although we are opposed to Senate Bill 115 as it is currently drafted, we do believe there are minor changes that would greatly improve this measure.

Senate Bill 115 creates a new instructional course designed to educate drivers on how to behave when interacting with law enforcement officers. Lines 22-28, which specify the type of information this course would provide students, illuminate the deeply problematic nature of this bill. The bill's emphasis on the behavior of drivers, and the onus it places on ordinary civilians of Georgia to protect their own safety, shifts responsibility away from the police, where the responsibility should lie. This bill requires civilians to take their safety into their own hands by learning how to interact with police officers.

Senate Bill 115 is putting a band-aid on a bullet wound. Instead of addressing the root cause of police brutality, Senate Bill 115 ignores the deeply ingrained racism and discrimination present in our system of policing. Rather than teach civilians how to avoid police brutality, Georgia should take proactive steps to ensure police officers do not use inappropriate force as, unfortunately, has been demonstrated to occur all over the country. This past September, a sheriff's deputy in Clayton County pinned down and beat Roderick Walker, a Black man, following a routine traffic stop due to a broken taillight. Senate Bill 115 sends a strong message; a message that ultimately insinuates that Roderick Walker is partially to blame for this horrible example of police brutality.

Senate Bill 115 doesn't even attempt to strike a balance of responsibility when it comes to police and civilian interactions. Georgia is not the only state to attempt to go this route, Texas has done the same, but in the case of Texas, they took a more balanced approach. In 2017, after Sandra Bland died in police custody, the State of Texas passed the ["Community Safety Education Act"](#) which implemented "Civilian Interaction Training"



for drivers, high school students, *and* police officers. The bill required inclusion of the following information in the training:

1. The role of law enforcement and the duties and responsibilities of peace officers;
2. A person 's rights concerning interactions with peace officers;
3. Proper behavior for civilians and peace officers during interactions;
4. Laws regarding questioning and detention by peace officers, including any law requiring a person to present proof of identity to a peace officer, and the consequences for a person 's or officer 's failure to comply with those laws; and
5. How and where to file a complaint against or a compliment on behalf of a peace officer.

We do appreciate the bill's sponsor for bringing this measure and we understand his intentions, but the ACLU of Georgia believes that as it is currently drafted, SB 115 wrongly places the onus on the civilians to protect themselves from harm when interacting with law enforcement officers. It is for these reasons that the ACLU of Georgia asks this committee and the bill's sponsor to consider revising Senate Bill 115 to take an approach similar to Texas. We believe that the government should always be in favor of teaching people their rights and we believe that following the lead of Texas, in this case, falls in line with that.

Thank you.