

Hi. I am seventeen years old and am currently studying at the high school Charles de Gaulle in Vannes, France. I left the 28th of August, which is why I am unable to attend this hearing. I am sorry if my letter is a bit informal, but I wish to portray this letter as how I would speak if I was able to attend.

It was the afternoon of Tuesday, August 12th. I got into my parents Volvo and drove north on 57th ave., my street. I continued up 57th to pick up a friend. I have had my license since March of 2007 and have had a perfect driving record. After picking up my friend I continued down 57th and turned left on Hawthorne heading west. I am two blocks from my house. I come up to a stop sign and slow considerably, to about two or three miles per hour. I slow almost to a stop and survey the area around me. There is no one around except for a truck stopped behind me. There is no one walking on the sidewalks, no one riding their bikes and no other cars. Upon evaluating the situation and assessing that there is no present danger to my passenger, anybody around me, or myself, I continue on my way. I then glance into my rearview mirror and see a policeman on a motorcycle flashing his lights. I immediately pull over thinking he wanted to pass me and continue on his way. The policeman does not pass me though and follows me to the side of the road. I honestly had no idea what I could have done wrong. I thought maybe I didn't put on my turn signal or something similar.

I roll down my window and a policeman asks me for my license and why I failed to stop at the stop sign. I was literally at a loss for words. I had no idea why he was pulling me over and when I found out why, I was at a loss for words. I did not feel like I had done anything gravely wrong. I have seen dozens of people "run" that same stop sign, but without the same consequences. To make matters worse, I don't believe there should be a stop sign there in the first place. There is no stop sign on the other side of the road going the opposite direction and there is no reason to stop. All connecting and intersecting roads have stop signs. Thus, I was given a ticket for "failure to obey a traffic control device."

While I do not contest what I did was wrong, I do contest with how the situation was dealt with. If I had completely ignored the stop sign and gone right through it without a second glance I would have justly paid the fine and this hearing wouldn't be in session. But that is not what happened. I did not come to a "complete" stop, but I approached the stop sign with caution and evaluated the situation for potential danger. Upon seeing none, I continued. I do not refute officer Thorsen's actions for pulling me over, he was doing his job and obviously a fine job of it, but I do refute the traffic ticket. Being a seventeen year old with no job, and one who is about to leave the country for studying abroad, I do not have the financial means to pay the \$242 traffic ticket for committing a minor mistake that I whole heartedly regret. I see now that what I did was wrong and I should have come to a complete stop, but I do not believe that the punishment fits the crime.

I am pleading not guilty on the basis that (believe you me) I have learned my lesson. A very hard lesson to have learned, but I learned it early in my driving career and in my life. I am young and have a lot to learn and so I would like a second chance to not repeat the same mistake that got me here and similar other ones that could have. I would like a second chance for my already high insurance rate to not increase and I would like the chance to keep my \$242 (or at least part of it) towards funding my education abroad.