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## U.S. Department of Justice

*United States Attorney  
District of Connecticut*

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE July 18, 2023**

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### **Ansonia Man Sentenced to Federal Prison for Stealing and Selling Catalytic Converters**

Vanessa Roberts Avery, United States Attorney for the District of Connecticut, announced that FRANCISCO AYALA, 22, of Ansonia, was sentenced today by U.S. District Judge Sarala V. Nagala in Hartford to 30 months of imprisonment, followed by three years of supervised release, for offenses related to his participation in a stolen catalytic converter trafficking ring.

According to court documents and statements made in court, this matter stems from an investigation into the coordinated theft of catalytic converters from motor vehicles across Connecticut. A catalytic converter contains precious metals, can easily be removed from its vehicle, and is difficult to trace, making it a desirable target for thieves. The average scrap price for catalytic converters currently varies between \$300 and \$1,500, depending on the model and type of precious metal component.

The investigation revealed that Ayala engaged in numerous catalytic converter thefts throughout Connecticut, and he was caught on surveillance video stealing converters from two vans at a business in Stratford on March 9, 2022. Between December 2021 and May 2022, Ayala and an associate sold approximately \$150,000 worth of stolen catalytic converters to a co-conspirator who transported the converters to other businesses, including businesses in New York and New Jersey, for further resale and profit.

On April 4, 2023, Ayala pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to commit interstate transportation of stolen property, and one count of interstate transportation of stolen property.

Ayala has been detained in state custody for unrelated theft offenses since May 2022.

This investigation is being led by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), the Internal Revenue Service – Criminal Investigation Division (IRS-CI),

and the East Hartford Police Department. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Lauren C. Clark and A. Reed Durham.

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