

February 4, 2023

My testimony in SUPPORT of LD 256 “An Act to Add Electric Bicycles to the Electric Vehicle Rebate Program”

Good afternoon members of the Energy, Utility, and Technology Committee.

My name is Steve Gerhartz. I am a resident of Kittery, and I am here today as a private citizen, also as an advocate of bike-ped safety and infrastructure improvement as a BCM Community Spoke, and board member of a 501c3 bike-ped advocacy group Seacoast Area Bicycle Riders, and owner of Seacoast Ebikes where our mission is “to provide sustainable and efficient transportation options to the New England community through the promotion and sale of high-quality electric bicycles. We strive to educate and empower our customers with the knowledge and resources necessary to make informed purchasing decisions, while also promoting a healthy and environmentally conscious lifestyle.” and to urge you to vote in support of LD 256.

In March 2017 I retired after 40 years in the retail auto space. One afternoon a neighbor came to my house riding an electric bicycle. At that time, I had no idea there was such a thing. When I asked her about it, she explained she was a lifelong bicycle rider and was in the late stages of cancer treatment, making her weak and unable to ride a conventional bike. Also being a lifelong bike rider, I asked her if I could try it, which I did, and it was one of those “aha” moments.

Somehow, I knew this would be a game-changer in many ways. For me, it was life-changing. I soon bought an Ebike and found myself riding more and more eventually dropping 40lbs and improving my health vitals significantly. For the record, I am 72 years old and now ride almost daily.

Having such a positive personal experience I began to look at Ebikes more closely and found very few bike shops either stocked Ebikes nor were they interested in them saying they are “cheating” “not bicycles” etc. This led me to open Seacoast Ebikes in June 2020 in the early days of the Pandemic. Since opening we have sold over 2,000 Ebikes with more than half of them to people over the age of 50, many who have not ridden in years, many with physical restrictions that keep them from riding a regular bike, and many too young families who are abandoning cars in favor of electric cargo bikes to transport their kids to and from school, run errands in short distances of 5 miles or less, and many people, especially Portsmouth Naval Shipyard area who are frustrated with the traffic, which is getting much worse, and tired of waiting in line and burning fuel to get on and off the base.

We are in the very early innings of a transportation revolution, not only EVs but all sorts of alternatives driven mainly by sustainable, clean, and inexpensive electric power.

The more we can incentivize people to choose these alternatives the faster we will help improve their health, economics, and the environment.

Thank you for your time and I would be glad to answer any questions.

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Steve Gerhartz
Kittery, SABR, BCM, Seacoast Ebikes
LD 256

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