

Dear Transportation Committee:

I'm Carlton Wilcox a resident of New Gloucester, Maine. I was born in Maine in 1962 and have lived in Maine all my life except for 7 years in the 1980s I lived in Indiana.

While living in Indiana 40-years ago, Indiana did away with its non-commercial vehicle safety inspection program because by their analysis the program made no statistical improvement in traffic safety. The effort was a waste of time and money and a distraction from efforts that really do improve traffic safety. In fact, averaged over the last 5-years of available NHTSA FARS (Fatal Analysis Reporting System) data, (2016-2020) Indiana and 19 other states have had a lower fatal accident rate per 100 million vehicle miles traveled (VMT). Of those 20-states that have a lower fatal rate, 11 do not have safety inspections. Nine of those eleven states without safety inspections are in the snow belt. In fact, every state in the continental US, with the exception of Missouri, west of Pennsylvania and north of Texas does not have a non-commercial vehicle safety inspection program. Thirty-five of the fifty US states (70%) do not have annual or biennial non-commercial vehicle safety inspections. Nebraska requires an inspection for vehicles brought into the state and Alabama requires an inspection upon the transfer of ownership.

Despite what garbage statistical reports that have been generated by special interest groups that generate a lot of revenue from vehicle safety inspections, vehicle condition is an extremely minor cause of vehicle accidents. The definitive reference for this fact is the NHTSA report DOT HS 812 506, Traffic Safety Facts, Critical Reasons for Crashes Investigated in the National Motor Vehicle Crash Causation Survey, March 2018. That investigation analyzed 5,470 crashes over a 2-year period that represent an estimated 2,189,000 crashes nationwide found the following:

96% of all crashes were due to the driver

2% were due to environmental conditions (weather)

2% were undetermined as to the cause

2% were due to the vehicle condition

Maine's vehicle safety inspection is trying to impact 2% of the total crashes!!!! The impact of the vehicle safety inspection program is non-measurable. It has no meaningful impact. Other factors, driver error with alcohol and speed being the two largest factors for fatalities are vastly more impactful.

Using the FARS data that Officer Scott submits to NHTSA, from 2016 through 2020, Maine averaged 158 traffic fatalities per year, a rate of 1.10 per 100 million VMT. This rate is marginally better than the US average of 1.19 VMT. That is in a nation that the vast majority of its citizens are not subject to motor vehicle safety inspections.

Of that 158 fatalities per year, which over that 5-year period had a low of 136 and a high of 173,

33% had a BAC greater than 0.08

31% were due to excessive speed

11% were unhelmeted motorcyclists

8.6% were pedestrians.

50% of vehicle occupant fatalities were not restrained. Per NHTSA 88% of Maine vehicle occupants are restrained. So the accident fatality rate is 4 times greater for unrestrained occupants than restrained.

Meanwhile, per NHTSA data, 2% of motor vehicle safety accidents are due to vehicle condition.

While it may be hard for Officer Scott to accept, no matter how hard he works or does not work, the motor vehicle safety inspection will not make a statistical difference to Maine's vehicle safety. Thirty-five other states have been honest to their citizens and have dropped the program.

Thirty percent of the states have vehicle safety inspection programs, they are nearly entirely located in the northeast. If the program is so great, why is Maine not in the top 30% for vehicle safety?. Of the 20-states (40% of all states) that have a better vehicle safety record than Maine, why do more than half of them not have vehicle safety inspection programs? It is because they are honest with their citizens and their legislatures have not been bought by special interests. The money and effort Maine puts into its vehicle safety inspection program could be much better spent elsewhere to much greater effectiveness.

Why does Maine allow 28 oz 8% alcohol single cans (Natty) to be sold in convenience stores where nearly every sale is going to drive away? That amount of alcohol is equal to 3.7 -12 oz beers with 5% alcohol. If someone weighing 140 lbs drinks that Natty in less than an hour they will have a BAC greater than 0.08.

Officer Scott's time could be much better spent enforcing every store that sells single serving cans/bottles of alcohol product to display a sticker on every cooler door with the average number of Maine fatalities the previous three years that a BAC greater than 0.08.

Or, go on a high school tour pulling a trailer with a crashed vehicle fatality that the driver exceeded a BAC of 0.08.

Or, sit on a bridge over pass with a police officer down the road to radio in people not buckled or on their cell phone.

Or, require motorcyclist to wear helmets.

Or, have every person when they renew their driver's license take an online 15-minute motor vehicle safety inspection class. It could be done on line accessed at home or their local library.

Again 98% of vehicle accidents are caused by something other than the vehicle's condition. Doing nearly anything other than continuing Maine's vehicle safety inspection program will improve Maine's highway safety. That is a statistical fact!

My experience with a Maine's vehicle safety inspection program is it is worthless or a scam.

Generally, I have my vehicle inspections done and buy my tires at Cameron Tire in Auburn. This requires I take a day off work since they are only open Monday through Friday. About 10-years back I took the day off but had forgotten to schedule the inspection with Cameron. They were booked. I took it to Maine Auto Service on Canal Street in Lewiston. They found nothing wrong except they claimed I needed new window wipers even though they worked fine the week before in a storm. For a fee of \$25 for the wipers and the inspection fee I could get my sticker. Today, 10-years later I bet they charge \$40 or more for their wipers, which were available retail across the street for \$10. And, they said my brakes barely passed inspection and should be replaced and they had availability right then to do the work. And my battery tested weak. I paid the inspection fee and found a shop in Auburn that could get me in that afternoon. The car passed without issue. My brakes lasted for several more years and when the wear bars started to make noise I took it in. My battery lasted for years more.

Year's earlier as a teenager I took my 1970 Ford Pinto in for its inspection. They failed it due to wheel well rust. I said the holes do not penetrate the vehicle cabin. His response was someone could scrap

themselves walking by it in a parking lot. First don't being humping peoples cars and you won't be scraped by a some wheel well rust.

About two years ago leaving the Irving at Exit 75 on the Maine Turnpike in Auburn there was a rust bucket pickup with an current inspection sticker. You could pass a taco through the driver's door into the cabin. It is not the vehicle condition but who you know that results in getting a sticker.

A friend of mine took his VW to Morong in Falmouth. They failed it because they claimed a weld on the exhaust system was about to fail and for \$180 they would fix it. He took it elsewhere and it passed and he never needed to repair that weld.

Five years ago I took my car to Cameron tire exclusively for a state inspection. They passed it without issue. Two weeks and 400-miles later the brakes start screeching. They were worn down the wear bars. Even at the wear bars there is a lot of brake pad left – many months. I took it to Cameron for new brake pads. Unless you pay for a ½ hour inspection which is going to cost about \$50, safety inspections are worthless. The purpose of Maine's vehicle safety inspection program is to drive business to mechanic shops where a large number take advantage of the customer.

I dare you to take the Maine vehicle safety inspection program challenge. Let a 25-year old Somali woman with two kids under the age of 5 borrow one of your older cars that has had a safety inspection the week before. Have her and her two kids visit 5 inspection shops and have her wired. You pick up the tab for what the shops are going to hit her up for.

In past years when I have given testimony in person on doing away with the Maine vehicle safety inspection program, the chair of this committee later responded that I needed to develop a relationship with my mechanic. If that is not an admission that the program is corrupt, I don't know what is.

Another prominent politician on the committee who, unanimously voted to reject the bill to do away the safety inspection program, said when Office Scott tells us that the program is needed we believe him. Read the NHTSA Crash Causation Report. Review the annual NHTSA crash data. NHTSA collects a tremendous amount of data and generates a great number of easy-to-read reports and data tables. Unlike Maine, at least 35-other states, are not abusive to their citizens by having the taxpayer fund a program that is worthless and abuses them.

Last summer I was in Idaho. My waitress had lived for the two previous year's in Maine as a school teacher in a small downeast town. Her statement about Maine is "It is a nickel and dime state. They like to nickel and dime you for everything". As an example, she brought up Maine's vehicle inspection program - a do nothing program that is a regressive tax on Mainers.

One last parting statement. Motorcycles have safety inspections. Why are there so many loud motorcycles that have obviously altered their exhaust pipes on the road? How come they are passing inspection? How come they are not being pulled over by the police? In the summer I can hear some approaching my house from a mile away and can hear them a mile and half to the south going up a hill. Why are those inspection shops not being closed? How many inspection shops have lost their license in the last 5-years? Who is policing the repair shops?

Do away with Maine's worthless, ineffective, and corrupt motor vehicle safety inspection program.

Sincerely,

Carlton Wilcox