



SIERRA CLUB

MAINE CHAPTER

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To: Members of the Committee on State & Local Government

From: David von Seggern, Sierra Club Maine

Date: March 30, 2023

Re: *Testimony in support of L.D. 655: An Act to Address Climate Change by Reducing Carbon Emission from State Vehicles*

Senator Nagle, Representative Stover and Members of the Committee on State & Local Government:

I am submitting the following testimony on behalf of Sierra Club Maine, representing over 22,000 members and supporters state-wide. We work diligently to amplify the power of our 3.8 million members nation-wide as the entire Club addresses combating climate change and promoting a just and sustainable economy. We urge you to vote “ought to pass” on L.D. 655.

The *Maine Clean Transportation Roadmap*¹ focuses on the benefits of electric vehicles (EVs) in meeting Maine’s climate goals. LD 655 brings an important step for Maine’s leadership role for combating climate change through sensible state actions. It overrides MRSA §1830, sub-§12 with the additional language (proposed as MRSA §1830, sub-§13) directing that purchases of light-duty vehicles by the State of Maine shall be only zero-emission, battery EVs rather than allowing hybrid vehicles. We consider hybrid vehicles to have been only a transition vehicle in reducing greenhouse-gas (GHG) emissions from the transportation sector; their time is past now that EVs are offered by many manufacturers. Battery EVs truly have zero CO₂ emissions while hybrid vehicles, still running mostly on an internal combustion engine, emit CO₂ on a regular basis. Of course, fully internal-combustion-engine vehicles emit CO₂ on a continuous basis.

The very recent *IPCC AR6 Synthesis Report*² (released March 20, 2023) paints an alarming picture of the world’s headway on reducing greenhouse gas emissions. We must clearly accelerate our efforts and move forward aggressively. We applaud that Maine has been recognized as a climate leader³ — the New Hampshire Sustainability Institute says: “...Maine is a leader in the region when it comes to climate action and has taken significant steps to address both mitigation and adaptation needs.” It further says “...Maine has demonstrated a serious commitment to addressing climate change...”. Governor Mills has strongly affirmed that commitment in her February 14, 2023 *State of the Budget Address*⁴ to the Legislature where she proposed new, aggressive climate goals.

¹<https://www.maine.gov/future/sites/maine.gov.future/files/inline-files/Maine%20Clean%20Transportation%20Roadmap.pdf>

² <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/sixth-assessment-report-cycle/>

³ <https://www.ucsusa.org/sites/default/files/2022-10/new-england-state-climate-action-assessment-full-report.pdf>

⁴<https://www.maine.gov/governor/mills/sites/maine.gov.governor.mills/files/inline-files/Gov.%20Mills%202023%20State%20of%20the%20Budget%20Address.pdf>



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The state's *Lead by Example 2021* report⁵ sets this target: "Purchase 100% light-duty zero-emission vehicles (ZEVs) for the state fleet by 2030". Due to the urgency of the climate crisis, we support advancing this target to 2024 and suggest an amendment be added to LD 655 to specify that year. We like the phrase "Maine Won't Wait" in relation to climate-action urgency, and here is a perfect example where Maine can act on that phrase.

The 2022 fleet of state vehicles comprised 3773 vehicles⁶, most of them being light-duty vehicles (under 8,500 pounds gross weight). Only ten of all those vehicles listed in the report appear to be zero-emission, battery EVs. By requiring all light-duty vehicles purchased by the state to be battery electric vehicles, the number will rapidly increase as normal turnover takes place. We recognize there are logistical problems in less-populated areas of the state where EV chargers may not be economical to install or where driving range of EVs is a concern. A workaround may be to move older vehicles from more populated areas to less populated areas and to replace the former with EVs.

We are also aware that the overall registration of EVs in the state by private citizens or companies only amounts to about 1% of the entire fleet of private vehicles. The state can help to show the general public that owning and operating EVs is essential to combatting the climate crisis while reaping the inevitable fiscal savings of EVs over their lifetime. By moving forward LD 655, the committee will help to make this happen.

Respectfully,

David von Seggern
Sierra Club Maine Volunteer Leadership

⁵ <https://www.maine.gov/future/climate/lead-by-example>

⁶ <https://www.maine.gov/bgs/centralfleet/documents/TITLE-5-ANNUAL-REPORT-2022-Final.pdf>