



Testimony in Support of LD 547:

“An Act to Modify Maine Motor Vehicle Inspection Standards to Permit Exterior, Nonstructural Corrosion That Does Not Directly Affect the Passenger Compartment”

Senator Nangle, Representative Crafts, and the distinguished members of the Committee on Transportation, my name is Harris Van Pate, and I serve as policy analyst for Maine Policy Institute. Maine Policy is a free-market think tank, a nonpartisan, non-profit organization that advocates for individual liberty and economic freedom in Maine. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of LD 547.

This legislation represents a common-sense and long-overdue adjustment to Maine’s outdated and overly burdensome vehicle inspection standards. Specifically, LD 547 would prevent vehicles from failing inspection solely due to corrosion on exterior, nonstructural body components that have no impact on the car's safety or structural integrity. The bill defines "exterior, nonstructural corrosion" clearly and reasonably, ensuring that safety remains paramount while allowing Mainers to avoid costly and unnecessary repairs that serve no purpose beyond aesthetic concerns.

Maine is one of only a handful of states that still mandate annual vehicle safety inspections for passenger vehicles.¹ Of those, very few require vehicles to fail inspection due to purely cosmetic issues. Other states with far harsher climates, including Minnesota and Michigan, do not mandate routine safety inspections. Yet, their traffic fatality rates are lower than Maine’s.² There is no compelling evidence that stringent inspection regimes reduce accidents or save lives, especially when applied to surface rust or corrosion on body panels.

A 2015 report by the Government Accountability Office found no conclusive proof that state safety inspections reduce crash rates.³ However, we know what these programs accomplish: they impose hidden taxes and unnecessary costs on working Mainers. Forcing residents to repair fenders, rocker panels, or tailgates simply due to rust-through that does not affect safety is not a wise use of their limited resources, especially in rural areas where incomes are lower, the weather is rougher, and vehicles are older.

¹ <https://1800lionlaw.com/vehicle-inspection-laws-by-state/>

² <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813627>

Maine’s Rate: 13.14 vehicle deaths per 100 k, Idaho’s: 11.09 vehicle deaths per 100 k, Michigan’s: 11.20 vehicle deaths per 100 k, Minnesota’s: 7.77 vehicle deaths per 100 k

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<https://www.repairerdrivennews.com/2015/08/27/gao-difficult-to-determine-if-state-inspection-programs-work-from-crash-data/>



LD 547 would restore sanity to this system. Mainers should not be penalized because their vehicle shows the natural effects of age and weather, especially when such corrosion is cosmetic. It does not compromise the safety of the driver or passengers. This change would alleviate financial pressure on countless households while empowering inspectors to flag dangerous structural integrity or mechanical failure-related issues.

Maine Policy Institute strongly supports reforms like this, which reduce regulatory overreach, respect personal responsibility, and eliminate unnecessary government mandates. By supporting LD 547, lawmakers can bring Maine in line with best practices from across the country and provide real relief to residents tired of paying for repairs that serve no purpose other than satisfying a checklist.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge the committee to vote “Ought to Pass” on LD 547. Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.