



### **Testimony in Opposition to LDs 556 & 667:**

“An Act to Modernize the Motor Vehicle Inspection Program and Amend the Law Governing Inspection Fees” & “An Act to Modernize the State Motor Vehicle Inspection Program and the Law Governing Inspection Fees”

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 strong opposition to LDs 566 and 667.

LD 566 bill seeks to expand Maine’s vehicle inspection regime by authorizing the Chief of the State Police to implement an electronic inspection system and increase the standard inspection fee to \$20. Similarly, while LD 667 establishes exceptions to the electronic system and maximum fee requirements, it still falsely supports and expands Maine’s unpopular annual vehicle inspection program. While the proposals may be framed as modernization efforts, they do nothing to address the core issue: Maine’s vehicle inspection program is unnecessary, ineffective, and burdensome to residents and businesses.

### **More Technology, More Surveillance, Less Liberty**

Mandating electronic inspections opens the door to increased government tracking of private citizens. As digital systems log more data—location, inspection history, vehicle specifics—questions arise about who has access to this information, how it will be stored, and how it might be used. These concerns are not abstract. Government “modernization” efforts frequently expand beyond their original scope, and once surveillance infrastructure is established, it tends to grow, not shrink. Mainers have a right to be wary of efforts that consolidate vehicle and personal data in centralized systems.

### **Financial Burden Without Clear Benefit**

Raising the inspection fee to \$20, regardless of the vehicle’s age or condition, will burden working Mainers, especially those in rural areas who rely heavily on personal vehicles for basic transportation. And for what purpose? Maine’s current inspection program already represents an annual cost to residents, yet it produces no measurable, quantifiable safety benefit. More than 30 states, including many with similarly harsh weather and more vehicle miles traveled, do not require annual inspections. A 2015 report by the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) shows no statistically



significant correlation between vehicle inspection programs and reduced crash rates or fatalities.<sup>1</sup>

### **Incentivizing Over-Inspection and Undermining Trust**

The clear intent of this bill is to prevent Mainers from “sticker shopping,” a practice itself which highlights the futility of vehicle inspection programs. Vehicle inspections are performed by humans and are subject to human error.

Expanding inspection procedures and tying them to digital records may also pressure mechanics and inspectors to err on the side of caution, potentially citing more minor issues or recommending unnecessary repairs out of fear of liability. If an electronic record shows a passed inspection and a vehicle later fails due to an undiagnosed problem, inspectors could be blamed or even held legally responsible. This creates perverse incentives and erodes trust between customers and mechanics.

If injury happens, regardless of fault, the inspectors may be held criminally or civilly liable, if the court feels they were negligent in their inspection. Inspectors may feel paranoid regarding inspections’ legal risks, such as a vehicle inspector in Vermont being found guilty of manslaughter,<sup>2</sup> or a mechanic in New York paying millions of dollars in a suit over a limousine crash.<sup>3</sup> If inspectors are too paranoid about minor wear and tear risks, they may overdiagnose problems and charge drivers more to fix nonexistent or minor issues.

Similarly, if an inspection station disagrees with the assessment of a previous inspection station and undercuts the initial estimate, the State Police, who administer the program, may end up taking action against its inspection license. Whether the electronic inspection system is used to surveil motorists or inspection stations, it’s a troubling intrusion on Mainers’ privacy.

### **A Solution in Search of a Problem**

LDs 566 and 667 fail to recognize the broader context: the inspection mandate is antiquated. Instead of “modernizing” a broken and outdated program, Maine should follow the lead of the majority of states and move away from mandatory annual inspections altogether. Our focus should be on reforms that reduce costs and restore

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<sup>1</sup>

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

<sup>2</sup> <https://vtdigger.org/2015/08/15/mechanic-charged-with-manslaughter-for-approving-inspection-of-vehicle/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.timesunion.com/news/article/mavis-paying-2-25-million-settle-one-limo-crash-18328905.php>



personal freedom, not reinforcing government mandates that are increasingly disconnected from public benefit.

For these reasons, Maine Policy Institute strongly urges the committee to vote “Ought Not to Pass” on LDs 566 and 667. Thank you for your time and consideration.