



## Department of the Secretary of State Bureau of Motor Vehicles

Shenna Bellows  
*Secretary of State*

Catherine Curtis  
*Deputy Secretary of State*

### JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

#### **L.D. 159 “An Act to Require Vehicle Registrations to Include the Next of Kin of the Vehicle Owner.”**

Shenna Bellows, Secretary of State

Department of the Secretary of State, Bureau of Motor Vehicles

February 27, 2025

Senator Nangle, Representative Crafts, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation, my name is Shenna Bellows. I am the Secretary of State and I reside in Manchester. I am providing testimony in opposition to L.D. 159 “An Act to Require Vehicle Registrations to Include the Next of Kin of the Vehicle Owner.”

This bill would require the Secretary of State to add the legal name and address of the next of kin of the registrant, if the registrant is an individual, to all registration documents. Should this bill pass, the workload and fiscal note will be substantial. This bill would require all registration forms to be updated. Multiple BMV computer systems and the municipal computer systems would also need to be updated. Every time an update is required to the municipal computer systems the vendors increase their maintenance fees.

The purpose of a registration document is not to identify someone’s next of kin. Registration certificates are used to help determine vehicle ownership, provide data when tracking a criminal, or assessing taxes.

While the intent of this bill is to identify next of kin in the tragic incidence when a death notification is required, it is important to remember that someone other than the registrant could be driving the vehicle. Also, up to three (3) individuals may be listed on a registration. This means someone other than a vehicle owner may be listed on the registration. Each of the individuals are considered a registrant. A vehicle owner may authorize someone else to register the vehicle in certain circumstances. Also, if a registrant’s right to register a motor vehicle is suspended due to an OUI, the registrant’s name may be removed from the registration and put into a family member’s name, if they reside in the same household until their right to register is restored.

This raises many questions regarding implementation of L.D. 159. For example, if there is more than one individual on a registration, will a next of kin be required for each registrant? If there are 3 individuals on a registration, the next of kin could be different for everyone. This means we could potentially have 6 names with different addresses on a registration document and the registration would need to specify which next of kin is designated for each registrant.

Processing time for registration will be significantly increased for municipalities and BMV branches. We will also be processing more corrected registrations than we do now, as each time next of kin changes for one registrant, the registration document would need to be updated.

Another question raised by this bill is whether or not someone would need to consent to being the next of kin on a registration. If so, we would have to collect each person's signature, which may require a new form to be created. Additionally, this bill does not address what would happen if someone doesn't have a next of kin. Nor does it address whether next of kin would be required on registrations that are issued to protected registrants, for example, registrants in the Address Confidentiality Program because they have been victims of domestic abuse, sexual assault or stalking?

This is not an issue that requires a new law. The easiest way to solve this matter is to remind people to keep emergency contact information on them. For example, most people carry cell phones and can mark their emergency contacts as such in their contacts.

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