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President of the Senate

THE MAINE SENATE
132nd Legislature

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**Testimony in Support of
LD 1209, Resolve, to Create a Working Group to Study the Safety and Use of Small
Lightweight Vehicles on Maine's Roads and Highways, the Systems and Laws Governing
Antique Vehicles and the General Improvement of Road Safety
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation
April 1, 2025**

Senator Nangle, Representative Crafts, and Esteemed Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation, my name is Mattie Daughtry. I serve as President of the Maine Senate and proudly represent Senate District 23, including Brunswick, Freeport, Harpswell, Pownal, Chebeague Island, and Yarmouth.

The constituents we represent depend on us to keep up with the times and to ensure safety of our roads and bridges. When a number of constituents reached out to me, passionate about making sure mini trucks could become a part of our transportation system, I started learning about Maine's legislative history related to smaller vehicles. I know this committee has considered mini truck legislation as recently as 2023.

I wanted to see what the path might look like to get Maine to the point where we could ensure mini trucks could be safely introduced on our roads. Knowing the BMV gets questions about legality from those who wish to purchase or use minitrucks, I turned to them first.

I worked with them and the Secretary of State's office to make sure LD 1209 is a bill rooted in common sense. This legislation directs the Secretary of State to convene a working group to study the potential to allow registration and use by motorists of small lightweight vehicles, including mini trucks, on the State's roads and highways, to review the systems and laws in place for antique vehicles, and to study improving road safety generally.

The Secretary of State would then report back to your committee by early December (December 3, 2025) and if there is a path for safe introduction of mini trucks, you are authorized to introduce legislation to the Second Regular Session of the 132nd Legislature.

When I asked my constituents why mini trucks are so important to them, I heard four big reasons:

1) **Affordability:** The cheapest new all wheel drive (AWD) Maine legal pickup truck costs over \$29,000. Mini trucks like Kei trucks rarely go for more than \$10,000 in America and can be imported for \$3,000-4,000. To get to that price in America usually you're buying a high mileage, rusted New England pickup like my beloved green 2001 Ford F-150. Every other small van has been removed from the American market, and large vans are rear wheel drive (RWD) so they don't mix well with Maine winters.

2) **Utility:** Kei trucks and vans have massive cargo room. You typically need a full size pickup to fit a sheet of plywood in the bed of a truck but Kei trucks fit plywood or sheetrock sheets flat and burns less gas in the process. They are small enough to navigate town and city streets and parks with ease, and powerful enough to go down pretty much anything but an interstate, (I'll note, I am personally not expecting to see these on Maine highways and I have concerns about speeds) all while fitting a small footprint.

In fact, I have been reminded by a very important constituent, my fiance, that they would be perfect for transporting grain from our local maltster. y

3) **Economy:** They cost less to maintain, are cheaper to run, ostensibly are cheaper to insure. Our constituents want affordable options. I believe we need to look into this.

4) **Demand:** Demand for kei vehicles, and small simple vehicles in general, is rising. People want these as they meet a need that is not being met by the current market which is being hindered by policy.

Right now, I can share that states like Idaho, Montana, and Oregon have embraced these compact vehicles, permitting their use on public roads with certain conditions, others like California, New York, and Massachusetts impose stringent restrictions due to safety and emissions concerns. Maine can work to create a path to legality that will help small businesses and our constituents thrive, while making sure that our high standards for a clean environment and safety are met.

Before the Secretary of State's Office weighs in to provide an amendment to the bill, I can say that I am fully supportive. The amendment seeks to ensure that one of the six members of the working group is a member of the Maine State Police Traffic Safety Unit. That would comprise the 8-member working group as follows:

1. The Secretary of State , Traffic or the secretary's designee;
2. The deputy secretary of state for the Bureau of Motor Vehicles;
3. One member from the Maine State Police, Traffic Safety Unit, who is an expert in vehicle safety and emissions standards appointed by the Secretary of State;
4. One member who is a representative of a motor vehicle insurance company appointed by the Secretary of State;
5. One member who is a representative of a motor vehicle inspection business appointed by the Secretary of State; and
6. One member who is a representative of a business that imports foreign cars for sale in the State appointed by the Secretary of State.
7. One member who is a House member appointed by the Speaker
8. One member who is a Senator appointed by the Senate President

Thank you for your time, your commitment to improving transportation in Maine, and your consideration of this legislation. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

President of the Senate, Senate District 23

Brunswick, Freeport, Harpswell, Pownal, Chebeague Island, and part of Yarmouth