

Testimony in Favor for LD 320 – An Act to Repeal Certain Motor Vehicle Inspection Requirements

Sponsor: Representative Fredericks

Date: April 8, 2025

Senator Nangle, Representative Crafts and Members of the Committee on Transportation, My name is Bill Montejo, I am a resident of the Town of Bowdoinham and here to testify in support of LD 320 An Act to Repeal Certain Motor Vehicle Inspection Requirements.

The current passenger vehicle inspection system is too reliant on subject assessments by individuals and create a system that can have the same vehicle pass and fail without any repairs done based solely on the discretion of the individual mechanic.

The more egregious and concerning issue with the current passenger vehicle inspection system is the failure of the inspection process to address the inability to repair a vehicle's redundant internal passenger safety systems due to the manufacturers' decision to discontinue making repair/replacement parts. This situation is compounded by a federal system that does not allow for after market parts to be made or purchased for repair of these systems.

To highlight this issue, let me tell you about my 88-year-old father, a military veteran who served from 1960-1980 and his beloved Nellie. Nellie is a 2006 VW Jetta diesel that my parents have owned since 2008. Nellie is my father's fishing friend in that Nellie has safely and reliably transported him from his home in Bowdoinham to his boat on the Royal River in Yarmouth. During the boating season, Nellie has done this 3 times a week and because of Nellie's incredible fuel economy my father only has to spend approximately \$48 in diesel fuel every 5 weeks to be able to enjoy his favorite retirement thing to do, fish out on Casco Bay.

Nellie has been well maintained over the years and is still very much a reliable car. However, after its last inspection in September of 2024 Nellie had an alternator failure that shorted out the passenger seat airbag control module. We were informed by the mechanic that there were no parts for this in the aftermarket parts world and we would have to obtain the part from a VW Dealer. The VW Dealer advised that the part was discontinued and can no longer be purchased and that there are none in any dealership or any warehouse. When asked what our options were we were advised we either needed to move to a state that doesn't require inspections or buy a new car.

We consulted with another VW dealer in York County and asked them to do a thorough diagnostic evaluation to determine if by chance the issues were a faulty wire, fuse or connection and the result was the same, Nellie needed a new passenger seat air bag control module. This dealer again advised us that the parts needed to repair this issue were no longer available. This dealer did go above and beyond and informed us that while they could not install used parts, we could try a used part from another vehicle if we could find one. However, the used part could

only be from another VW Jetta with the 8<sup>th</sup> vin code digit of a K and only in 2006-2007 model years.

After numerous searches and multiple used parts, the air bag code still exists and we struggle to understand why there is nothing in the current system that allows for consideration of a waiver or removal of a requirement that is part of a redundant system (the vehicle automatic door locks and seat belt system still function and provide safety for the occupant) especially when the parts to repair the system are not available. The elimination of an operating air bag system in a motor vehicle does not create a safety risk to people outside the vehicle and the occupants of the vehicle still have more safety features that are functioning (such as seatbelts) to keep them safe than a motorcycle operator who is not required to wear a helmet.

In closing I would urge the passage of this bill, but if the Committee chooses not to pass it, I would encourage that the Committee pass a resolve directing that the Maine State Police to amend the passenger motor vehicle inspection rules. The rules should not deny passage of a vehicle inspection for an air bag code when the vehicle manufacturer no longer creates parts to repair, or the parts are unavailable for an extended period of time (greater than 2 weeks); provided the vehicle has other functioning safety systems such as seat belts.

Somehow when there were no parts to repair the Takata air bag recalls, and the serious safety risks they posed for premature deployment, it was not an issue to continue to approve inspections of passenger vehicles with these known defects in the airbag system to operate on our roads. However, now when a manufacturer intentionally discontinues providing parts to repair a redundant safety system this legislature and the Maine State Police say it is no longer safe to approve these vehicles to continue to be on the road, even though the issue does not pose a safety risk to the general public or anyone else on our roads.

It does not seem right to force a veteran to discard a vehicle that he has owned and maintained for many years, and which does not endanger the safety of the public or any other individual on the road due to his/her inability to get parts for a redundant system.

Thank you and I would be happy to address any questions you have.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bill Montejo", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Bill Montejo  
Bowdoinham, Maine