



STATE OF MAINE
Department of Public Safety
Maine State Police
Traffic Safety Unit
State House Station 20
Augusta, Maine
04333-0020

JANET T. MILLS
GOVERNOR

MICHAEL SAUSCHUCK
COMMISSIONER

COL. WILLIAM ROSS
CHIEF

LT. COL. BRIAN P. SCOTT
DEPUTY CHIEF

Testimony of Lt. Bruce Scott

IN OPPOSITION TO LD 661

An Act to Amend Motor Vehicle Inspection Requirements

Senator Nangle, Rep. Crafts, and distinguished Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation, my name is Lt. Bruce Scott, and I am the Commanding Officer of the State Police Traffic Safety Unit. I am here today to testify on behalf of the Department of Public Safety and the Maine State Police IN OPPOSITION OF LD 661.

This bill would exempt any motor vehicle that can be driven with a class C driver's license from a motor vehicle safety inspection for the first three years after the month in which it was manufactured. In addition to the enforcement nightmare of police officers trying to determine the month the vehicle was manufactured, or even the year when traveling down the road, there are major safety concerns with this bill. There would also be a conflict with federal law as a "commercial vehicle" is defined as any vehicle over 10,001 pounds that is engaged in commerce, yet you can operate a vehicle up to 26,001 pounds on a class C license, meaning many commercial vehicles would be exempted from inspection by this bill. Also, many heavy use vehicles like tow trucks, Ubers, limousines, ambulances, cruisers and plow trucks are driven under the harshest of conditions and often travel 50,000 or more miles per year, meaning they may travel over 150,000 miles without

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the requirement to be inspected annually. Compounding the problem, in three years some of these vehicles will no longer be under warranty and the very intent of the bill to save Mainer's time and money will have the opposite effect. New vehicles are usually covered under warranty, so many of the defects found at an annual inspection would be covered under warranty, at little or no cost to the owner.

Additionally, this bill requires an inspection to be performed during this 3-year period if any of the inspectable components of a motor vehicle are damaged in a collision or natural disaster. This bill also requires the vehicle to be inspected if the vehicle is sold, yet law enforcement would have no way of knowing if the vehicle was recently damaged and repaired or sold to determine if it needed to be inspected or not.

Even brand-new vehicles fail inspection, many arrive at the dealerships with safety defects that you may find shocking. One study shows that 3.2% of one year old vehicles fail inspection and that rate increases annually. J.D. Power and Associates stated in a publication in June 2023 that "new vehicle quality declined by 11% last year amid parts shortages, shipping snarls and the global trade disruption." Last year my Motor Vehicle Inspectors personally witnessed new vehicles with defects that included but were not limited to, loose spring eyelet and U-bolts, incorrectly installed center bearings, a drag link that wasn't securely fastened, and a clevis pin that was completely missing. The drag link is a critical steering component that affects the maneuverability of a vehicle and without a clevis pin, the air brakes on that axle did not work. Loose bolts on the suspension system can greatly affect handling and during extreme braking or turning can cause catastrophic failure. Center bearings on drive shafts are important as they are used to maintain proper alignment and free movement of the shaft as it delivers power to the differentials or transaxles. Failure can result in a sudden loss of power or even worse, could cause the shaft to fail and become ejected from the vehicle causing additional damage and potentially causing the vehicle to lose control and crash. Numerous light duty vehicles were discovered to have loose brake calipers (bolts completely missing), loose stabilizer links, missing or loose suspension mounting hardware, loose fasteners on numerous components, electrical issues, etc., that caused them to fail an inspection.

One of my responsibilities in being the Troop Commander of the Traffic Safety Unit is serving as our Fleet Director. In that role it is my responsibility to ensure that our fleet of 645+- vehicles, that travel approximately 12 million miles per year, are properly maintained and safe for extreme

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operations. These vehicles can go from sitting at an idle to traveling in excess of 100 miles per hour only moments from leaving our garage after a service or inspection. We frequently discover safety defects during normal maintenance intervals of every 8,000 miles. We also see vehicles that develop major safety issues between these maintenance check-ups and those vehicles are taken out of service and are brought in for immediate repair. With that in mind, it is scary to me to think that other vehicles belonging to other fleets would be exempt from an annual inspection, which may be the only time they are looked at by a licensed technician. If this bill passed, many fleet vehicles would be sold off due to high mileage and a lack of reliability without ever needing to be inspected.

As you deliberate over this bill you may also want to consider that there would be a substantial fiscal note of approximately \$262,500 a year for perpetuity (75,000 new vehicle stickers at \$3.50 apiece), additionally there would be the loss of \$2.50 a year for two more years for those same vehicles totaling over \$637,000 for that 3 year period. There may also be a financial penalty for backsliding if the State of Maine reduces its carbon credits by exempting the annual inspection of motor vehicles in Cumberland County. Millions of federal dollars and an increase in crashes and human lives are at risk here for potential savings of \$12.50 per year to the consumer. Also please keep in mind that most, if not all, new auto dealers provide free inspections to their customers for the life of the vehicle, meaning there is essentially no savings what-so-ever for the consumer.

For these reasons, we urge you to vote "Ought Not To Pass" on LD 661.

On behalf of the Department of Public Safety and the Maine State Police, I thank you for your time and would be happy to try and answer any questions that you might have.

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