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Testimony of Lt. Bruce Scott

AGAINST LD 1508

An Act to Clarify the Law Regarding Tinted Windows in Motor Vehicles

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 to LD 1508.

This bill, if passed, would compel the Chief of the State Police to issue medical tint waivers for vehicles to those that have submitted a proper application, even when it is not in the best interest of public safety, or in violation of federal law or not for purposes intended by the exception. Current law has a process in place that allows the State Police to issue a medical waiver to a person who usually occupies the vehicle if they are adversely affected by sunlight. The State Police has seen an increase in these medical window tint waiver applications over the years from 35 in 2014 to 288 in 2024 and we expect these numbers to continue to grow.

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Our agency recognizes the importance in protecting everyone from the harmful UV rays emitted by the sun and can appreciate the use of window tint for those with light sensitivities. Like many well-intentioned laws intended to protect those in certain situations with certain conditions, this exemption has already turned into a free for all to anyone that has a medical care provider that is willing to sign a waiver for any purpose. This bill would take away the discretion of the State Police to limit abuse, prevent multiple waivers for multiple vehicles to the same person and would allow for tint to be applied to windshields, which is currently not allowed.

The law already allows a person to apply unlimited window tint on a windshield above the AS1 line, window tint on driver and passenger side windows as long at least 35% light can be transmitted through them and unlimited tint to all rear windows behind the B-post and rear windshield. This is allowed without a medical waiver and even though 100% lawful, makes it difficult for an operator to see clearly in low light conditions. The current medical waiver additionally allows a vehicle to have unlimited window tint on the driver and passenger windows, but this bill would allow the unlimited tinting on windshields as well. The window tinting of windshields should never be allowed as the danger to public safety is greatly outweighed by the very limited (if any) medical benefit.

Those with light sensitivity issues have reported a great improvement following these current laws and can wear sunglasses when the sun is too bright coming through the windshield. The windshield already blocks from 94% to 99% of the harmful rays of the sun because they are constructed with laminated glass, which consists of two layers of glass bonded together with a plastic interlayer. Also, you can purchase UV blocking film that doesn't have any tint to it if someone needs additional protection. To my knowledge, when this law went into effect the only window film that blocked UV rays was tinted, hence the medical need for tint waivers. With modern advances in solar protection, there really isn't a medical need at all to have tinted windows.

In the recent past we have had a couple different medical providers call our office to inquire about what conditions qualified a person to

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get a medical waiver for window tint, as they couldn't see the reason the law allowed for the waiver in the first place. When they were told that the law allows the medical provider to determine if their patient is "adversely" affected by sunlight they laughed and stated in substance, well I guess that means anyone can get a waiver. With that in mind, while you are deliberating over this bill, you may want to consider if there is a need to allow for medical waivers at all. Driving a vehicle with tinted windows at the maximum allowable tint currently authorized by law creates limitations in visibility under certain conditions and the medical waiver that allows for unlimited window tinting causes even greater visibility concerns. Now that you can obtain UV blocking film that is completely clear, we can achieve maximum UV protection without further compromising safety with blacked out windows that reduce visibility.

For these reasons, we urge you to vote "Ought Not to Pass" on LD 1508.

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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