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Testimony of Rep. Matthew Beck introducing

LD 1324, An Act to Protect Maine Consumers Shopping for Electric Vehicles from Deceptive Advertising and Marketing Practices

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development

Good morning, Senator Curry, Representative Gere and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development. My name is Matthew Beck and I'm proud to represent House District 122, part of South Portland. I stand before you today to introduce **LD 1324, An Act to Protect Maine Consumers Shopping for Electric Vehicles from Deceptive Advertising and Marketing Practices**.

I am honored to be joined by a bipartisan group of cosponsors from across the state in supporting this important consumer protection measure. While "electric vehicle" is in the title, that's not what this bill is really about. It's about truth and transparency in advertising and marketing. It's about ensuring that Mainers are not misled when making a major purchase.

For many Maine families, buying a vehicle is one of the largest investments they will ever make. Yet, far too often, well-funded automakers use slick marketing to blur the line between true electric vehicles and gasoline-powered hybrids. Terms such as "electrified," "beyond zero" and "to each their own electric," accompanied by lightning-bolt graphics or plug icons, mislead consumers into believing they're purchasing a plug-in EV when in fact the vehicle runs on gasoline and cannot be charged at home. LD 1324 would close this loophole, ensuring that terms and imagery in vehicle ads accurately reflect whether a model is actually electric.

Electric vehicles (EVs) offer substantial long-term savings. Over 15 years, drivers save an average of \$14,500 on fuel and \$8,000 on maintenance compared to gas-powered cars. In addition, when federal and state incentives are stacked, eligible Maine consumers can receive up to \$15,000 off the sticker price. Regardless of whether you decide to buy an EV or not, when you decide to buy something, you should get what you're paying for.

Misleading advertising risks hurting consumers who may purchase a vehicle expecting far greater long-term economic benefits from fuel costs, reduced maintenance needs and tax credits than they ultimately receive. Older Mainers on fixed incomes can be particularly susceptible to

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deceptive marketing. They may struggle to distinguish between truly electric models and their imitators. LD 1324 protects Maine consumers by prohibiting misleading language and imagery in advertising of gas-powered hybrids.

I discussed this proposed legislation with Christina Moylan, the Assistant Attorney General for Consumer Protection, and her insightful feedback has helped to improve the bill. Thanks to her suggestion, instead of creating a new enforcement mechanism, it defines infringements of this act as violations of existing statute: the Maine Unfair Trade Practices Act.

For the benefit of Maine consumers, I urge you to vote for LD 1324. Thank you and I am glad to answer any questions you may have.