



Joint Standing Committee on Transportation

LD 2047: An Act to Improve Safety by Allowing the Use of Variable-message Signs on Public Service Vehicles 2053

Senator Nangle, Representative Crafts and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Dan Goodman, and I am the Manager of Public Affairs and Traffic Safety for AAA Northern New England. AAA serves more than one million members across Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont, AAA actively advocates for public policies that make New Hampshire a safer place to live, work, and raise a family. Today, I come before you in support in LD 2047: An Act to Improve Safety by Allowing the Use of Variable-message Signs on Public Service Vehicles.

Each year, AAA responds to approximately 250,000 roadside assistance calls in Maine. Every one of those calls places a tow truck operator or roadside professional on the shoulder of a road often just feet from fast-moving traffic on the Maine Turnpike, I-95, Route 1, and countless rural highways. Maine's largely rural roadways, high speed limits, limited lighting, and frequent nighttime and winter conditions create especially dangerous environments for roadside workers.

LD 2047 provides clear authority for authorized public service vehicles, including tow trucks, to use variable-message signs while stationary and actively engaged in roadside repair, vehicle recovery, or traffic control. For AAA and our contracted service providers, this means being able to use clear, highly visible messaging to warn approaching drivers that roadside professionals are present and that they need to slow down and move over

The safety need is well documented. AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety research found that nearly 2,000 people were killed outside of a vehicle in roadside crashes between 2017 and 2021. Between 2015 and 2021, at least 123 roadside assistance providers were struck and killed while doing their jobs. On average, 24 emergency responders, including tow truck operators, are killed each year about one every other week.

The good news is that variable message signs are a proven, effective safety countermeasure. The AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety research shows that when these message signs are active:

- Drivers are significantly more likely to slow down and move over
- The odds of a vehicle moving over increased to 95 percent
- Speed reductions were greatest in the lane closest to the roadside vehicle
- Vehicles that did change lanes tended to do so at lower speeds

The research clearly indicates that variable message signs positively influence driver behavior and should be strongly considered to protect roadside workers.

Similar laws have already been adopted successfully in 45 other states. For AAA and our service providers, this legislation would allow us to equip our tow trucks with additional tools to warn approaching drivers earlier and more clearly. For the public, it means fewer crashes, fewer injuries, and safer travel for everyone. AAA respectfully urges the Committee to support this legislation and help ensure that those who assist stranded motorists on Maine's roads can return home safely at the end of their shift.

