

Good morning Sen. Deschambeault, Rep. Warren and members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee. My name is Jay Davis, I live in Belfast and will speak in support of LD 1479.

I have been a volunteer and supporter of Restorative Justice for more than a decade, and through my involvement I have come to believe that our criminal justice system has skewed dangerously sometimes toward punishment and legalese and away from preventing and repairing harm. An example of this is the need for LD 1479.

Rep. Morales' bill addresses situations in which a vehicle is being driven in accordance with the law except that certain administrative shortcomings that present no danger to the public are evident. If the vehicle was being driven too fast, or erratically, or with reckless disregard for safety, as with, say, a flat tire, an officer would have stopped it for understandable reasons.

In his testimony last spring State Police Lt. Bruce Scott gave lengthy descriptions of the potential dangers posed by an expired inspection sticker or registration, an apple core tossed out a window, or snow on a windshield. Again, these conditions are not a danger to the public because if they were the driver could be stopped and cited for truly dangerous operation. I have been stopped several times for trivial reasons. Once an officer said he didn't like the way I took a corner, even though I had performed that task adroitly. Another time I asked an officer why he stopped me and he said, "Because I can."

In these instances and others the officers shone their light around the interior of my car and sniffed, too. As though I was doing something criminal that my driving didn't even hint at. Others have testified that racial profiling has been one consequence of the use of these invasive traffic stops. I could add long hairs driving beater cars to that practice.

I also think truly dangerous drivers – those inattentive for a variety of reasons, fatigued, depressed or angry, even compromised elderly – continue on their way while others are stopped and questioned unnecessarily.

Despite Lt. Scott's cataloguing of the dangers of expired stickers, etc., I think these stops, thousands of them every month, are demeaning and unnecessary. Please give an Ought to Pass vote on LD 1479.

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