



Testimony in support of LD 188:

“An Act to Permit the Sale of Motor Vehicles on Sundays”

Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and the distinguished members of the Committee on Housing and Economic Development, my name is Harris Van Pate, and I serve as policy analyst for Maine Policy Institute. Maine Policy is a free market think tank, a nonpartisan, non-profit organization that advocates for individual liberty and economic freedom in Maine.

LD 188 is a necessary reform that aligns Maine’s business regulations with the realities of a modern economy and enhances consumer choice. The current prohibition on Sunday vehicle sales is an outdated restriction that serves no compelling public interest and arbitrarily limits economic activity. By removing this unnecessary restriction, Maine can foster a more competitive and free-market environment for businesses and consumers.

Eliminating Unnecessary Government Restrictions

The existing prohibition on Sunday vehicle sales is a remnant of outdated “blue laws” which arbitrarily restrict business operations on certain days of the week. The original justification for these laws was to instill Christian religious values in the population, which some felt was a noble goal at the time.¹ However, Maine, as I’m sure we’ll agree, is a far more diverse state today than it used to be, ethnically, culturally, and religiously.

Creating a universal restriction on Sunday car sales is not only economically unwise but also creates unfair restrictions for those not of the Christian faith. The fact that devout Christian dealerships aren’t open on Sundays might be a substantial advantage for competing businesses owned by Muslims, Jews, Hindus, or other religious minorities in Maine. Still, this law unfairly forces them to, in effect, observe the Christian sabbath of Sunday.

Several states, including New Hampshire, allow vehicle sales on Sundays without issue, demonstrating that such regulations are not necessary to maintain fair competition or protect public interests.² This is often something that Maine is mocked for, as businesses competing from across our border in New Hampshire have an inherent advantage over Maine dealerships.

¹

<https://www.gettips.com/blog/sunday-blue-laws#:~:text=Blue%20laws%20in%20the%20U.S.,work%20and%20limit%20alcohol%20consumption.>

²

<https://www.fosters.com/story/opinion/2010/02/22/blue-laws-have-had-their/51696876007/#:~:text=To%20many%20who%20live%20in,many%20businesses%20shuttered%20on%20Sundays.>



Enhancing Consumer Choice and Convenience

Prohibiting auto sales on Sundays places an undue burden on consumers, particularly those who work long hours during the week and may only have weekends available to visit dealerships. This restriction forces Maine residents to adjust their schedules or travel to neighboring states to purchase vehicles, effectively putting our local businesses at a competitive disadvantage.

Supporting Maine's Economy and Small Businesses

Repealing the ban on Sunday sales will benefit Maine's economy by allowing dealerships to operate based on customer demand rather than government mandates. Allowing businesses to choose their own hours fosters competition, encourages economic growth, and ensures that Maine's auto industry is not losing potential revenue to out-of-state dealerships that do not face similar restrictions.

Aligning with Free-Market Principles

Maine Policy Institute believes in limiting government interference in commerce unless there is a clear and compelling reason to do so. The restriction on Sunday auto sales serves no substantial public interest and imposes unnecessary constraints on businesses and consumers. By passing LD 188, the Legislature will take an essential step toward reducing regulatory burdens and promoting a business-friendly environment in Maine.

Conclusion

For these reasons, we urge the Committee to support LD 188 and advance this critical measure. Eliminating outdated and arbitrary restrictions will empower Maine businesses, provide greater convenience for consumers, and put religious minority businesses on an equal footing. Thank you for your time and consideration.