



Maine Municipal Association

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Testimony of the Maine Municipal Association

In Opposition Of

*LD 712 - An Act To Eliminate the Requirement for an Inspection for a
Noncommercial Vehicle Less Than 20 Years Old*

LD 490- An Act To Eliminate Certain Motor Vehicle Inspections in the State

LD 431 – An Act To Repeal the Requirement That Certain Motor Vehicles Be Inspected

LD 354 – An Act To Require Motor Vehicle Inspections Every 2 Years

LD 284 - An Act To Provide That Inspections of New Motor Vehicles Are Valid for 2 Years

Senator Diamond, Representative Martin, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation, my name is Rebecca Graham, and I am providing testimony on behalf of Maine Municipal Association (MMA) in opposition to LD's 490, 431, 354, 284 and 712 at the direction of our 70 member Legislative Policy Committee.

MMA has chosen LD 712 to focus our response to the list of inspection related bills this committee will be considering because it is the most egregious of the proposed legislation however, municipal officials feel the sentiments outlined in this testimony apply to all legislation that attempts to exempt certain vehicles from inspection, or lengthens the time between inspections beyond current law.

Annual inspections are a responsibility we assume to make sure our vehicles are safe for our family members, neighbors, and other drivers. The cost is minimal compared to the catastrophic mechanical failures the process can unmask before a potentially fatal accident. As drafted, this bill assumes that because a vehicle is less than 20 years old it is somehow safer than older vehicles. This is a dangerous proposal.

Vehicle inspections are crucial to road safety as we rely on other vehicles on the road to have adequate stopping power for sudden road hazards, which include meandering children and distracted pedestrians. Road conditions, tires, speed, and adequate brakes are crucial to reducing accidents and saving lives. These are not items that have a long lifespan as they are used daily.

Cracked windshields and bad wiper blades reduce visibility for drivers in Maine's harsh and ever-changing weather. Ball joints regardless of the age of a vehicle are pummeled annually by our weather impacted roads, aging infrastructure, and even construction hazards such as uneven pavement.

A ball joint failure can be catastrophic and fatal particularly at a highway speeds.

Even under perfect conditions, brake pads have an average lifespan of 15,000 – 35,000 miles, which is an average years' worth of driving in a rural state. Tires, a very expensive vehicle necessity, vary with respect to useful life, with cheaper softer tires losing their tread quickly on rough Maine roads reducing their ability to stop even further.

In 2019, Maine's towns and cities spent an estimated \$330 million on the care and maintenance of local and urban compact roads trying to keep crumbling infrastructure passable for vehicles. Passable roads are only one part of the public safety concern for communities in our rural state where it is nearly impossible to live without a vehicle.

Municipal officials understand the economic hardship faced by our residents who lack the capacity to shoulder significant vehicle repair needs. The answer to this problem is not to reduce our safety standards, but to invest in our neighbors through transportation alternatives or safety grant programs for low income individuals. Officials urge you to vote ought not to pass on the legislation that reduces the inspection standards in existing law.