



Testimony in Support of LD 284, “[An Act To Provide That Inspections of New Motor Vehicles Are Valid for 2 Years](#),” LD 354, “[An Act To Require Motor Vehicle Inspections Every 2 Years](#),” LD 431, “[An Act To Repeal the Requirement That Certain Motor Vehicles Be Inspected](#),” LD 490, “[An Act To Eliminate Certain Motor Vehicle Inspections in the State](#),” LD 712, “[An Act To Eliminate the Requirement for an Inspection for a Noncommercial Vehicle Less Than 20 Years Old](#),” and Against LD 565, “[An Act To Study the Fee Structure for Motor Vehicle Inspections as It Relates to the Viability of Inspection Stations](#).”

Senator Diamond, Representative Martin, and the distinguished members of the Committee on Transportation, my name is Nick Murray and I serve as policy analyst for Maine Policy Institute, a nonpartisan, non-profit organization that advocates for individual liberty and economic freedom in Maine. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of reforming Maine’s vehicle inspection requirements.

To date, a majority of states do not require vehicle inspections for safety. Only 20 states still have these laws on the books and five of them, including California, Colorado and Rhode Island, require them only every two years.¹ Maine would do well to repeal these mandates on its citizens, too.

Last year, state vehicle inspection and registration requirements were suspended for over nine months under an emergency declared to manage a threat to public safety.² Car repair shops were deemed essential, but state inspections were not. If this rule was crucial to ensure public safety, Governor Mills would not have suspended it. If this has not borne out in more dangerous roadways, then there is no reason to keep the current requirement as is.

We support all of the bills being heard here with the exception of LD 565. Concept drafts are opaque and limit public understanding of the process; they should be severely curtailed in future sessions. That said, there is no need to study the fee structure for this program. It is an unnecessary mandate on the people and unrelated to ensuring safe roadways.

Many supporters of Maine’s mandatory inspection law assume that mechanical defects are responsible for a large proportion of motor vehicle accidents, but accidents due to distracted driving, speeding, or altered states are much more likely than poor vehicle maintenance.

¹ “[A Surprising Number of US States Don't Require Vehicle Inspections](#),” J. L. Seto, MotorBiscuit.com

² [EO 15 FY 20/21 | Governor Janet T. Mills | October 19, 2020](#)

Vehicular mechanical failures are such a minor factor in collisions that the Maine Department of Transportation just started including them in their most recent crash statistics report published in 2019. Of course, there is potential for a crash to be caused by more than one factor, but the report shows little more than 3% of the accidents from 2015 to 2019 involved a vehicular issue. Those involving tire, wheel, steering, suspension, transmission, or brake issues made up only 1.75% of the five-year total. Crashes involving the influence of alcohol, drugs, or medication made up 2.67% of all crashes in that five-year period.³

Supporters of state inspections also claim that Maine's harsh winters and salty roads accelerate vehicle deterioration, and that comparing Maine to southern states that have repealed their inspection laws is unfair. But winter conditions haven't prevented Minnesota, North Dakota, and Connecticut—which receive an average of nearly 50 inches of snow a year—from repealing their vehicle inspection programs.

With more government mandates, the people lose more of their liberty with no guarantee of safety. Residents and visitors of the 30 states without mandatory inspections rely on personal responsibility, as we all do in many aspects of daily life.

Anyone at any time can bring their car to a mechanic to have it inspected for safety. Here in Maine, many local and chain auto mechanics advertise a “free multi-point inspection,” which are often at least as thorough as the state examination. This is employed as a successful marketing tactic. Responsible drivers take advantage of this offer as an opportunity to diagnose any potential problems with their vehicle.

29-A MRSA §1768, sub-§5 designates the authority of the State Police to determine if a driver is operating a “defective vehicle,” including ¶B which states, “A person who violates this subsection commits a Class E crime if the vehicle is unsafe for operation because it poses an immediate hazard to an occupant of the vehicle or the general public.”⁴ This need not be tied into inspections requirements in order to maintain law enforcement authority in this realm.

Passing any of these five bills would greatly help Mainer's' pocketbooks, especially those struggling to make ends meet, while also ensuring safe roads. Please report them “Ought to Pass.” Thank you for your time and consideration.

³ [Statewide Crash Stats 2019](#) | Maine Department of Transportation

⁴ Maine Revised Statutes, [Title 29-A, §1768: Unlawful acts](#)

NOTES

[Vehicle inspections \(MHPC report\)](#)

[Liam's testimony from 2017](#): effects of fines/penalties on low-income earners, regressive

Liam's testimony on [another bill](#):

"There is little evidence that state inspections are effective at identifying mechanical problems. In one study, researchers in Pennsylvania intentionally created 13 defects in a brand new car prior to inspection. Among the several garages they visited, the detection rate of real defects varied widely, from 25 to 54 percent. Interestingly, while mechanics on average only found 5 of the 13 defects, they also "found" an average of 2 non-existent defects.⁵"

[A Surprising Number of US States Don't Require Vehicle Inspections](#) - 15 states require annual safety inspections: Georgia, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Vermont, Louisiana, Maine, Nevada, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, Hawaii and West Virginia

5 states require safety inspections every 2 years: California, Colorado, Illinois, Missouri, and Rhode Island

[Driving Statistics: The Ultimate List of Car Accident Statistics \[2021\]](#)

From 2005 to 2007, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration conducted a study on the cause of motor vehicle accidents.⁶ Though the data is more than a decade old, it remains the best source we have to evaluate causal factors in motor-vehicle crashes.

Out of roughly 2,189,000 accidents included in the study, vehicle components failures were responsible for only 44,000 accidents, or only 2%. Of that 2%, tire/wheel failure accounted for about 35%, brake-related problems accounted for about 22%, and steering/suspension/transmission/engine-related problems were assigned as critical reasons in 3% of such crashes.

Sadly, NHTSA data from the first 9 months of 2020 show that traffic fatalities rose by 4.6%, even though total miles driven in that time was down 14.5% year-over-year.⁷ Who would blame this on the suspended enforcement of vehicle inspections? Although full data on 2020 is not yet available, economic and social desperation due to vast government-mandated shutdowns of business and society were

⁵ [Vehicle Safety Inspection Systems: How Effective?](#) | American Enterprise Institute

⁶ [Crash Stats: Critical Reasons for Crashes Investigated in the National Motor Vehicle Crash Causation Survey](#)

⁷ [Crash Stats: Early Estimate of Motor Vehicle Traffic Fatalities for the First 9 Months \(Jan–Sep\) of 2020](#) | National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

likely larger factors for the rise in traffic fatalities than mechanical malfunctions resulting from unenforced inspection stickers.