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Testimony of Lt. Bruce Scott

AGAINST LD 354

An Act To Require Motor Vehicle Inspections Every 2 Years

Senator Diamond, Representative Martin and distinguished Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation, my name is Lt. Bruce Scott, and I am the Commanding Officer of the State Police Traffic Safety Unit. I am here today to testify on behalf of the Department of Public Safety and the Maine State Police Against LD 354.

We already testified in opposition to LD 284 that seeks to create a two-year inspection requirement for new vehicles. The information provided during that testimony also pertains to this bill as LD 354 seeks to do the same for all motor vehicles, regardless of age. As you all know, Maine requires vehicles to be inspected annually. Despite annual inspections, approximately 25% of vehicles still fail for some safety reason. The greater the time in between inspections, the greater the failure rate. The greater the failure rate, the greater chances of a catastrophic failures, resulting in more crashes.

We are seeing substantial rusting on Maine vehicles and a vehicle that just barely passes inspection today due to advanced rusting would not have to be inspected for two more years. Already weakened and stressed frames, suspension, steering and drive train components may not last two more years years, almost assuring an increase in vital component failures with dire consequences. Also, a vehicle's crash worthiness decreases as these components wear and deteriorate. A five-star rating can be quickly reduced if integral components are not inspected, repaired or replaced when needed.

As with LD 284 there would be fiscal concerns in addition to the safety concerns already discussed in these bills. If vehicles were inspected at half the frequency, then half the 3.5 million dollars in revenue would be lost as well. If LD 354 and or LD 284 were to pass the State of Maine may backslide and forfeit millions of dollars in federal assistance.

Federal law requires commercial vehicles be inspected annually. State law requires school busses to be inspected twice a year by a licensed technician and at least once a year by a member of the Maine State Police. These laws are important to help ensure that all vehicles that share the roadways are in safe operating condition, yet LD 284 and 354 would decrease the strength of the entire safety program.

Maine enjoys one of the lowest defect related crash rates in the country yet arguably has one the harshest environments. How is that possible? It is possible because the State of Maine has a progressive, current, thorough, relevant and properly managed safety inspection program that nips problems in the bud before they become insurmountable. "If it ain't broke don't fix it!"

For these reasons, we urge you to vote Against LD354.

On behalf of the Department of Public Safety and the Maine State Police, I thank you for your time and would be happy to try and answer any questions that you might have.