

Darryl Brown Jr.  
Maine Auto Recyclers Association

Senator Diamond, Representative Martin and Distinguished Members of the Transportation Committee. I am Darryl Brown Jr. co-owner of Brown's Exit 27 Salvage in Gardiner and also a member of Maine Auto Recyclers Association. Thank you for allowing me to speak today in hopes of making a better law to help stop the problem of catalytic converter theft. My personal opinion is that LD796 as written doesn't stop the problem. I believe the state of Maine and in the future the U.S Government need to license buyers of scrap catalytic converters. Right now there is no rule in place to regulate who can become a dealer of scrap catalytic converters so there is little if any accountability. This creates an opportunity for morally challenged people to jump into the business at the drop of a hat or when the prices rise. Anyone can claim to be a buyer as anyone monitoring social media such as Facebook Marketplace or Craigslist can easily find someone willing to buy a catalytic converter. Of course a lot of these people are honest and just trying to make a living but there are people that fly under the radar meaning they don't have a business name, known address etc. this type of buyer doesn't consider how the converters were obtained by the seller, they are only thinking of making a quick buck. Often the converter theft problem goes hand in hand with drug abuse. I have heard allegations of people taking a stolen converter in trade for heroin. Most of the buyers sell the converters they buy out of state to larger dealers or refineries. This fact makes it near impossible for our local law enforcement to have a chance to investigate. There are also plenty of out of state buyers that come around trying to buy, some from as far away as New Jersey have stopped at our business. The price of the precious metals in catalytic converters is at an all time high so this issue is very concerning right now. My concern with the idea of placing a VIN on each converter is that if these numbers are not in some sort of data base there is a lot of room for deception. We need to come together as a group of concerned citizens to create an enforceable law to curb the problem. This is a great opportunity for our organization, MARA to work with the enforcement agencies to come up with a solution. Thank you for allowing me to comment on this subject in hopes of finding the best solution.