



Testimony of the Maine Municipal Association

In Opposition To

LD 159– An Act to Require Vehicle Registrations to Include the Next of Kin of the Vehicle Owner

February 27, 2025

Sen. Nangle, Rep. Crafts, and distinguished members of the Transportation Committee, my name is Rebecca Graham, and I am submitting testimony in opposition to LD 159 at the direction of MMA's Legislative Policy Committee (LPC). Our LPC is made up of individuals from across Maine with municipal officials elected by their peers across Maine's 35 Senate districts representing communities with very different access to available enforcement resources and local capacity.

Officials are concerned that this requirement poses unnecessary bureaucratic hoops for individuals who have no direct next of kin to designate another, while respecting there is a desire to provide an easily accessible contact for individuals involved in a fatal or life-threatening accident. As drafted, the bill would require every individual to identify someone who later is not the desired choice of the individual to be considered a next of kin and may require an individual to continually update a system when they have no family members. The provision should be voluntary for all individuals who renew a registration and often has no nexus to the individual operator of a motor vehicle which may cause unnecessary distress for the vehicle owner.

Because such a designation would offer a false sense of belief that the operator may also be the registered owner, officials believe that such a requirement may be better suited as a voluntary disclose for the driver's license program and not the vehicle registration program. Municipal officials often register vehicles on behalf of registered owners presented by a party who is registering a vehicle on behalf of the owner and may lead to the designation either being mistakenly assigned to another individual or place additional barrier for individuals who are not able to be present to register their vehicle and the ability to assign the task to another trusted party while they are abroad serving the military or attending college, etc.

Additionally, the added collection and continual updating of information regarding the next of kin during the registration process will constitute an added duty for municipal clerks and this bill will need the mandate preamble. Once a vehicle is registered currently, there is no reason to reopen the file until the following year or until the vehicle is transferred to a new owner, or new municipality. As drafted, municipal clerks will also be charged with continually updating the designation as family or friendship dynamics change unless there is a system established for self-reporting through the Bureau of Motor Vehicles. Not all communities are connected to the automated online registration system.

For these reasons, municipal officials ask that you consider assigning the task to licensing authority not municipal vehicle registration clerks and attach the next of kin designation to a task that requires often requires an in person renewal rather than place additional barriers or processes to registering a motor vehicle, which may have no nexus to the vehicle operation.