

**The Maine Heritage Policy Center  
Testimony Against LD 844  
“An Act To Prohibit Driverless Commercial Vehicles”**

Senator Diamond, Representative McLean and distinguished members of the Committee on Transportation, my name is Adam Crepeau and I serve as a policy analyst at the Maine Heritage Policy Center. Thank you for the opportunity to express our opposition to [LD 844](#).

The Maine Heritage Policy Center opposes this bill because there is no evidence that such a broad prohibition on driverless commercial vehicles is needed to protect public safety, and such a prohibition would significantly impair Maine’s competitiveness in the years ahead as autonomous vehicles revolutionize surface transportation.

Last year, the legislature created the Commission on Autonomous Vehicles to “coordinate efforts among state agencies and knowledgeable stakeholders to inform the development of a process to allow an autonomous vehicle tester to demonstrate and deploy for testing purposes an automated driving system on a public way.”<sup>1</sup> The work of that commission is ongoing and its final report may not be released until January 2022.

Also last year, then-Governor LePage created the Maine Highly Automated Vehicles (HAV) Advisory Committee to oversee the beneficial introduction to Maine of HAV technologies and assess, develop, and implement recommendations regarding potential pilot projects initiated to advance these technologies.<sup>2</sup>

With these two bodies studying the complex issues surrounding the impact of driverless vehicles, it would be premature to impose a blanket ban on driverless commercial vehicles, especially considering the technological strides that have been made and the speed with which other states are moving to capitalize on this opportunity.

Applying autonomous technology to long-distance trucking may be particularly fruitful, helping to substantially reduce highway accidents, save fuel, and move freight more reliably. For example, although drivers must maintain an appropriate following distance from other vehicles in order to react to changes in speed or road conditions, with wireless communication, a line of

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/bills/getPDF.asp?paper=HP1204&item=3&snum=128>

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.maine.gov/tools/whatsnew/index.php?topic=Gov\\_Executive\\_Orders&id=776188&v=article2011](https://www.maine.gov/tools/whatsnew/index.php?topic=Gov_Executive_Orders&id=776188&v=article2011)

autonomous trucks can accelerate and brake over much shorter distances. As the Brookings Institution explains, “Closer following distances in a truck platoon lowers air resistance on the following vehicles, with fuel savings that add up quickly for multiple trucks hauling cargo over long distances. The popularity of platooning laws suggests a wider focus on commercial applications of autonomous vehicle technology on the state level.”<sup>3</sup>

According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, no other state has enacted a bill similar to this one, and many have specifically amended their laws to permit experimentation with truck platooning.<sup>4</sup>

More than most states, Maine’s communities -- 84.4% of them, in fact -- rely on trucks to move their goods.<sup>5</sup> Safer, faster, cheaper, and more efficient trucking, made possible by autonomous systems, will deliver significant benefits to consumers and producers in our state.

Autonomous vehicles technology has an exceptional safety record, and experts expect broader adoption of these vehicles to dramatically reduce motor vehicle crashes and traffic deaths.

According to the NHTSA:

“Automated vehicles’ potential to save lives and reduce injuries is rooted in one critical and tragic fact: 94 percent of serious crashes are due to human error. Automated vehicles have the potential to remove human error from the crash equation, which will help protect drivers and passengers, as well as bicyclists and pedestrians.”<sup>6</sup>

Driverless commercial vehicles hold great promise for Maine. I urge you to vote “Ought Not to Pass” on this bill. Thank you.

---

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/techtank/2018/05/01/the-state-of-self-driving-car-laws-across-the-u-s/>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.ncsl.org/research/transportation/autonomous-vehicles-legislative-database.aspx>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.mmta.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Quick-Glance-Trucking-Stats-2018.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.nhtsa.gov/technology-innovation/automated-vehicles-safety>