

The Maine Heritage Policy Center Testimony to Support LDs 10, 117, 270, and 389 Bills That Ease Vehicle Inspection Requirements

Senator Diamond, Representative McLean, and distinguished members of the Committee on Transportation, my name is Mike Quatrano and I serve as the Director of Civic Engagement for The Maine Heritage Policy Center. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding LDs 10, 117, 270, and 389.

The Maine Heritage Policy Center is here today to testify in favor of easing vehicle inspection requirements on Maine residents. Vehicle inspections can be considered the government's stamp of approval to allow individuals to drive their cars. Ideally, as the appended report states, we would rather see vehicle inspections eliminated altogether in Maine. However, we believe any relief provided to Maine residents is better than the annual inspection law. Vehicle inspections are outdated and have already been nixed from statute in a majority of other states and it would be wise for Maine to do the same.

Critics of these bills will claim more accidents will occur as a result of their passage. This claim is inaccurate. A study conducted by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration found that only two percent of crashes could be attributed to vehicle-related problems.¹ Vehicle operators are far more likely to be harmed by a distracted driver than be in an accident due to the failure of a mechanical component in their vehicle. In addition, states that have repealed their vehicle inspection mandates have not seen an increase in traffic fatalities and some have even seen a decrease.²

In the past, efforts to repeal Maine's inspection mandate have been met with warnings that doing so would cause car insurance rates to surge by increasing the frequency of accidents. This claim is easily tested using comprehensive data from the National Association of Insurance Commissioners, and is plainly false.³ Data from 2016 shows that the average premium for liability insurance in states that did not have inspection mandates was \$517 per year, compared to \$548 in states with mandatory inspections. The same dataset shows that out of the 10 most expensive states for liability insurance, five have inspections and five do not. Out of the 10 most affordable states for liability insurance, three have inspections and seven do not. Thus, car insurance premiums are unlikely to increase due to the repeal or easing of the vehicle inspection laws.

Another layer of protection comes from law enforcement in Maine. Law enforcement officers at the state and local level can stop a vehicle if they believe it is unsafe to drive. If the vehicle is an immediate hazard

¹ <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/812115>

² https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.google.com/&httpsredir=1&article=1319&context=fhssconference_studentpub

³ https://www.naic.org/prod_serv/AUT-PB-15.pdf

to the public or has caused an accident, the operator could be charged with a Class E crime.⁴ Therefore, vehicles can already be deemed unsafe by law enforcement, eliminating the need for all Maine residents to get their vehicles inspected annually.

Critics of this bill might also point out that salt corrodes the metal on vehicles more rapidly in Maine than other states and that the inspection program helps reduce the number of unsafe, corroding vehicles. However, other states that receive high volumes of snowfall and use chemicals such as sodium chloride to combat the effects of winter weather have repealed vehicle inspection requirements entirely, including Connecticut, North Dakota, Minnesota, Colorado, Michigan, Utah and Alaska.⁵ Research has not shown that accidents, injuries and fatalities increased in these states since repealing annual vehicle inspection requirements. This proves states that use harsh chemicals during winter have survived the test of time without annual vehicle inspections.

Further, a variety of studies show that vehicle inspection stations miss defects and manufacture mechanical issues upon inspection. In one study, researchers in Pennsylvania showed that only 25-54 percent of defects had been detected. On average, only five of 13 defects that were intentionally created for this research were found when taken to garages. Also, the garages manufactured an average of two additional defects that were non-existent in the vehicle.⁶ This and other similar studies show that vehicle inspection stations do not find all defects during an inspection and can require non-existent problems to be fixed before they approve an inspection sticker for the vehicle. This well-intentioned law allows vehicle inspection stations to hold vehicle owners hostage financially in order to pass a government mandated litmus test, even if nothing is faulty with the vehicle.

Since vehicle inspections do not make the roads any safer, have been repealed in the majority of other states, and have shown to miss defects during the inspection process, we urge the committee to support easing vehicle inspection requirements on Maine residents. Thank you.

⁴ <https://legislature.maine.gov/statutes/29-A/title29-Asec1768.html>

⁵ <https://raybuck.com/salt-rust-corrosion-by-state/>

⁶ <https://www.aei.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/VehicleSafetyInspectionSystemstxt.pdf>