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Testimony of Lt. Bruce Scott

AGAINST LD 270

**An Act to Eliminate Certain Motor Vehicle Inspections in the State of
Maine**

Senator Diamond, Representative McLean 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 270.

In addition to the testimony already provided today on LD 10 and LD 117;

If my interpretation of LD 270 is understood correctly, it would eliminate the annual inspection requirement for all vehicles in Maine except for commercial vehicles, fire trucks, school buses and vehicles sold by a dealer. LD 270 removes the current inspection requirements by repealing section 1751 and moves the standards to a much lower threshold by only leaving the standards set forth under section 1756. This bill also repeals the current statute requiring Enhanced Inspections in Cumberland County, inspection of Catalytic Converters, inspection of fuel tank caps and on-board diagnostics. Actually, the only inspection standards not stripped by this bill as it is written for non-commercial inspections, would be for fenders and windows. Yes, that is correct, this bill would require that the inspection standards be re-written in their entirety and only authorizes the Chief of The Maine State Police to create inspection standards for windows and fenders. The inspection standards for commercial vehicles and school buses would remain the same as they are today.

The same justification used to keep the inspection requirements for commercial vehicles, fire trucks and school buses is applicable to all vehicles.

Anecdotally, one out of four vehicles fail an inspection in Maine and many of them due to serious safety defects like brakes, brake lines, fuel lines, ball joints,

tie rods, shocks, oil leaks that constitute a fire hazard, tires, etc. If these defects go undetected with the elimination of inspection requirements, the safety of all roadway users would be compromised. Our state has extreme conditions and weather that further abuse our vehicles and shorten their lifespan. For a mere \$12.50 to \$18.50 a vehicle is inspected from front to rear and top to bottom by a licensed inspection mechanic to ensure that they meet only minimum standards for safety. The current standards are set by the State Police, per Title 29-A section 1769, in collaboration with all stake holders within the industry as well as our federal partners such as AAMVA (American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators) and NHTSA (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration).

AAMVA wrote the following in their best practices guide, "AAMVA promotes periodic motor vehicle inspections (PMVI) to ensure that vehicles are maintained for safe operation." They further state, "PVMI programs can prevent vehicle failure on the highways and crashes that may result in injuries or death. These programs are increasingly important as people keep vehicles for longer period of time."

NHTSA states in their Uniform Guidelines for Highway Safety Programs that "Each state should have a program for periodic inspection of all registered vehicles to reduce the number of vehicles with existing or potential conditions that may contribute to crashes or increase the severity of crashes that do occur, and should require the owner to correct such conditions." NHTSA goes on by providing minimum standards that each state should include in their program. In a 2008 report NHTSA estimates that vehicle component failure was the "critical reason" for 2% of all crashes (three most common failures were related to brakes, tires and steering components) and that evidence of a vehicle system breakdown was present in 6.8% of all crashes. I would suggest that these numbers, while significant, are grossly underreported. Police officers are not mechanics nor do they perform post-crash inspections very often, therefore most officers find causation as driving behaviors rather than mechanical defects.

An article published by Elsevier in 2015 concluded after reviewing Pennsylvania vehicle registration data with two large samples of results from state safety inspections that "safety inspections should continue to be implemented in order to keep driving conditions safe." They also concluded that the older a vehicle is and the higher the mileage the greater the failure rate is, but indicated that even vehicles beginning at 1 year old have a failure rate of 3.2%. Cambridge Systematics Inc (2009) summarized that the Pennsylvania Inspection Program estimated 1 to 2 fewer safety related fatalities per billion VMT in a state with versus without a safety program. Based on those results they found that Pennsylvania benefits from between 127 and 187 fewer fatalities each year. The authors of the Cambridge paper conclude that in every case, the benefits outweigh the calculated program costs by at least 100M, making the program worthwhile to continue to implement.

For these reasons, we urge you to vote Against LD 270.

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.