

To: The Vermont Senate Committee on Transportation

From: Maurice's Service Center (Automotive Repair Facility in St. Albans, VT)

Re: Proposal for VT to move to a 2 Year State Inspection vs 1 Year

To whom it may concern:

I am writing this testimony as not just an employee of an automotive repair facility in the state of Vermont but also as a concerned citizen of the state.

I have many concerns with this new proposal starting with the safety of our communities by moving to such a lengthy term of inspections on Vermont vehicles. Having worked in the automotive industry for almost 30 years now, I have seen quite a lot of vehicle repairs being done on all kinds of vehicles. Some major issues such as suspension and steering issues, due to wear and tear from our roads here in Vermont, which unfortunately, due to a lot of our weather conditions, have never been in the best shape. Potholes are creeping out all the time and not fixed as soon as they should be. Road deterioration due to these potholes and frost heaves in the spring causing a lot of suspension issues. The use of salt and brine mix on our roads in the winter months has caused tremendous issues with the body of vehicles like never before. We see lots of rust and rot occurring on major body parts of cars now, that was never quite this bad before the brine mix was used. I know these are issues that have always been there, but now, with moving to a two year inspection you are basically stating that mechanics need to put an inspection sticker on a vehicle and state that this vehicle should be good for another two years. How is that possible in these kind of road conditions here in Vermont?

I would think that any mechanic would be leary putting his name on an inspection sticker and stating that yes you can get by for another two years before this needs to be tended too? Who is going to be liable for that vehicle and it's passengers when something tragic happens? Two years is a long time to go and state that a vehicle will be safe in our conditions here in VT. You as a state are making it very hard for us, as repair facilities, to want to take that risk! We are going to be liable to that person. It is nothing for people today to say, " I just got my vehicle inspected a year ago and it was fine." Trust me I see people say that all the time. I "JUST" had it fixed and come to find out it was over a year ago and that person expects that nothing will go wrong with that vehicle until the next inspection comes around. So basically I am saying, this puts the state, the garage and the person driving that vehicle all at risk.

I personally do not want to be driving on roads where other drivers do not feel the same way as I do about the safety of my vehicle. I have seen many customers come into our repair facility and need major work to be done, however, because they are not technically DUE for an inspection yet, they will not fix the vehicle until they absolutely need to, which is either when the vehicle fails inspection or the vehicle becomes disabled to a point that they can no longer drive it. Then it becomes an emergency. Who knows too, at this point, this individual could be driving on the interstate at a higher rate of speed and his wheels fall off. The individual can be seriously hurt or have seriously hurt or killed another person in another vehicle all because he was negligent in getting his vehicle repaired because he still had another year to get the vehicle inspected. Again, at this point, who is the liable person here? The individual? The mechanic and garage who put the inspection sticker on the vehicle a year ago and said it would be good for two years? Or the State of Vermont for having passed a law stating that a 2 year inspection was a good idea?

I understand the fact that the people of Vermont are in tough times. Things are very expensive here and everywhere else, but to cut back on this one thing is not going to solve the problem. In reality it will only escalate the issue. When someone comes in for repairs and finds out that they need \$1,500 worth of work to get their vehicle inspected and they choose not to do anything at this time to repair it because they have another year before an inspection is necessary, what happens? They continue to drive the vehicle until inspection is actually due. During this time, anything could happen. They could have an accident or break down. At this point, they then have to fix the vehicle, but guess what? Now that they have gone so long they have caused other damage to the vehicle and it is now going to

cost them double to get the vehicle fixed! So where is the savings in that for the customer! And, is the customer going to be able to afford to do the repair now? Most likely not!

And how about the fees now associated with inspections? I am sure those are all going to double in cost. I mean the state has already said that they would increase their inspection fees from \$8/sticker to \$16/sticker. Does the state not realize that it's fellow repair facilities are going to have to do the same thing? Of course we are! We have to pay twice as much so the cost of such a thing would have to be offset somewhere and the customer is going to have to pick up that increase. How is this thinking of the customer? In reality this is only making it even harder for that individual to be able to afford to keep this vehicle which they need to have to go to work. I think in doing a two year inspection we are setting ourselves up to see a lot of vehicles in unsafe conditions, which puts our community at risk.

The other thing that the state is not considering is how this will affect the state financially. When a customer comes in once a year for inspections and needs even just a minor repair the state is making money off that repair with the sales tax and the inspection fee. By making this a two year inspection, the state is losing out on sales tax from the loss of sales that we as repair facilities will be losing as well.

I think you will see a lot of repair facilities will also think twice about wanting to be an inspection facility due to the liability that I spoke of earlier. Now a days, when something goes wrong, the individual is constantly looking for someone to blame for that wrong doing. I think lots of repair facilities will not be passing vehicles for inspections if they have to think that this vehicle has to be safe for two years. Now when a customer comes in and has a tire that is at 4/32nds (with 2/32nds being not passable), they may think twice about putting an inspection sticker on that vehicle. Right now that tire may make it a year, but it definitely will not make it two years.

In summary, a two year inspection period is an idea that just does not seem like the solution to a problem that will only become worse if this gets implemented.

If we are trying to make inspections a little easier on the consumer, maybe we should take another look at some issues that fail an inspection. I understand that you have some proposed changes and I have read those, and think that these changes would be a good idea, however, there are other areas of the manual that should be considered for changes as well. For example, bumpers. A bumper can be held up for inspection if it has a crack or hole in it. I have seen a lot of cars fail for such a thing and it does not make any sense why this is a failure. I can understand if the bumper is falling off or has pieces hanging or jutting out, but for a crack or hole where the bumper is still firmly attached makes no sense to me. Also, the issue of check engine light. I do not believe a check engine light should be attached to an inspection. I understand this is one way for the state to control emissions testing, however, a lot of items that the check engine light will kick on for do not in any way affect the safety of a vehicle. We need to go back to a safety inspection being what it was originally intended for....the safety of the vehicle and those individuals who drive that vehicle.

Thank you for taking the time to read my testimony and hopefully, take into consideration my concerns for our state moving forward with a two year vehicle inspection.

Sincerely,

Kristie Callan

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