

Vermont Committee
Vermont State House
Montpelier, VT

Dear Vermont Senators and Representatives,

I am writing a second letter because the recent article regarding this bill was published after I had already finalized my first letter. After reading it, I felt compelled to respond again.

Changing Vermont's inspection laws will not make vehicles safer. In fact, it will likely make repairs more costly in the long run because many people will postpone necessary maintenance. Many of the repairs required during inspections are safety-related. While it may seem like removing inspection requirements saves a mother money in the short term, it could mean her children are riding in a vehicle with rotted brake lines or a failing wheel bearing — conditions that could result in catastrophic failure.

We already struggle to convince customers to complete basic maintenance, such as overdue oil changes. When oil changes are delayed too long, engines fail. That repair costs thousands of dollars and leaves a vehicle undrivable. Preventative maintenance protects both safety and affordability.

The article also stated that there are not enough shops to inspect vehicles. That is not true in Rutland County. Within fifteen minutes of our small repair shop in Pittsford, there are multiple inspection stations. Because our shop slows down during the winter months, I invested approximately \$4,000 in mailers to neighboring towns offering an inspection special to ensure we could keep our four full-time technicians employed. Without steady Vermont State Inspection traffic, we may be forced to lay off a technician — or worse, close our doors.

It is also important to note that inspection stations do not profit from inspections the way many assume. A complete vehicle evaluation takes about an hour. We charge roughly half of our standard labor rate, and that does not include the cost of the inspection sticker itself. Shops are not trying to take advantage of customers. We are trying to keep vehicles safe.

Many of our customers are highly intelligent professionals — teachers, lawyers, nurses, tradespeople, business owners. Automotive repair is not their area of expertise. We have seen vehicles come in that owners believed were fine, but were in fact extremely unsafe.

There seems to be a disconnect between state leadership and the people who live and work in Vermont. Rather than asking how to reduce inspection requirements to “help” vulnerable Vermonters, perhaps we should be asking how to make Vermont more affordable overall so everyone can thrive.

If there truly are not enough repair shops in some areas, what is being done to support new small businesses and skilled trades? Why not require high schools — not just trade schools —

to offer one or two basic automotive maintenance courses? Students would either learn to maintain their own vehicles or discover an interest in a much-needed career field.

If affordability is the concern, another major factor must be addressed: road salt usage. The amount of salt applied to Vermont roads significantly accelerates corrosion. Vehicles deteriorate rapidly because of it, increasing repair costs for families across the state.

Our proposal is this: Keep Vermont safety checks as a yearly requirement, but allow vehicles to pass with documented advisories. The vehicle owner would be informed of necessary safety repairs and could complete them over a reasonable timeframe. If an accident occurs due to a known but unrepaired issue, responsibility would fall on the vehicle owner. This approach maintains legal operation, promotes transparency, allows families flexibility in paying for repairs, and preserves the viability of Vermont inspection stations.

Vermont small businesses like ours are not asking for special treatment. We are asking to be heard.

Respectfully,

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