

Testimony in Opposition to LD 1659, An Act to Raise Revenue to Fund Firefighting Equipment Purchases and Training Related to Electric Vehicle Fires Through a Fee on Electric Vehicles

To the Committee on Transportation

by Josh Caldwell, Climate and Clean Energy Policy Advocate for NRCM

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Senator Nangle, Representative Crafts, and distinguished members of the Committee on Transportation, my name is Josh Caldwell, and I am here on behalf of the Natural Resources Council of Maine (NRCM) in opposition to LD 1659, An Act to Raise Revenue to Fund Firefighting Equipment Purchases and Training Related to Electric Vehicle Fires Through a Fee on Electric Vehicles. NRCM is Maine's leading nonpartisan membership organization dedicated to protecting Maine's environment, with nearly 20,000 supporters statewide and beyond.

EVs beat gas cars on fire risks

LD 1659 would serve to suppress electric vehicle (EV) adoption during a critical moment in our climate response. The bill ignores the fact that gas-powered cars are, according to Kelley Blue Book data, 61 times more likely to catch fire than EVs,¹ and would penalize EV drivers rather than supporting efforts to reducing their impact on climate change and air pollution.

Taxing EVs ignores cost and climate benefits

Reducing emissions from our transportation sector is "Plan A" in Maine's Climate Action Plan, and that strategy hinges on increasing adoption by making EVs more available and affordable in the coming years. In addition to the climate imperative, EVs save drivers money and are a critical tool for the continued development of a flexible electric grid. EVs cost significantly less to drive than gas cars due to far lower fuel costs and fewer maintenance requirements², and are set to reach upfront cost parity with internal combustion engine vehicles by next year.³ Mainers who drive EVs now save between \$19-\$30 every time they charge an EV instead of filling up a

¹ Kelley Blue Book, December 2023, *Report: EVs Less Likely to Catch Fire than Gas-Powered Cars*, <https://www.kbb.com/car-news/report-evs-less-likely-to-catch-fire-than-gas-powered-cars/>

² Atlas Public Policy, *Comparing the Cost of Owning the Most Popular Vehicles in the United States*, March 2024, <https://atlaspolicy.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Comparing-the-Cost-of-Owning-the-Most-Popular-Vehicles-in-the-United-States.pdf>

³ Kelley Blue Book, *Study: EVs Could Reach Price Parity in 2026*, December 2024, <https://www.kbb.com/car-news/study-evs-could-reach-price-parity-in-2026/>

tank of gas.⁴ Further, Maine’s Energy Plan published this year by the Governor’s Energy Office finds that EVs offer a “significant opportunity for flexible load management” and are a critical tool for reducing electricity rates in the coming years.⁵

EV firefighting resources already exist

While EV fires are rare, they do have unique characteristics, and need to be handled with a specialized response. It is imperative that firefighters in Maine and elsewhere are trained in how to handle EV fires and have the resources to do so effectively, both for the safety of our first responders and for the wellbeing of the general public. Fortunately, the Maine Fire Service Institute, Maine Clean Communities, the National Fire Protection Association, the US Department of Energy, and other reputable organizations already offer specialized trainings for EV fires that are available to Maine first responders.

Raising taxes on vehicles that are less likely to catch fire to fund firefighting resources that in some cases already exist, while undermining the fuel savings and clean air and climate benefits EVs bring to Maine isn’t a sensible solution. We urge the Committee to vote Ought Not to Pass on LD 1659, and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

⁴ Washington Post, *Is it cheaper to refuel your EV battery or gas tank? We did the math in all 50 states*, August 2023, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/interactive/2023/electric-vehicle-charging-price-vs-gasoline/>

⁵ Governor’s Energy Office, *Maine Energy Plan 2025*, January 2025, <https://www.maine.gov/energy/sites/maine.gov.energy/files/2025-01/Maine%20Energy%20Plan%20January%202025.pdf>