



Department of the Secretary of State Bureau of Motor Vehicles

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JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

L.D. 611 “An Act to Allow the Secretary of State to Collect Excise Taxes on Motor Vehicles Owned by Residents Who are Unhoused.”

Testimony of Shenna Bellows, Secretary of State and
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Department of the Secretary of State

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Senator Nangle, Representative Crafts, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation, I am pleased to provide testimony in support of L.D. 611 “An Act to Allow the Secretary of State to Collect Excise Taxes on Motor Vehicles Owned by Residents Who are Unhoused.”

This bill would amend 36 MRSA, §1484 to allow an individual resident of the State who has no residing place to pay excise tax on a motor vehicle directly to the Secretary of State. Any excise tax collected by the Secretary of State would go to the General Fund.

The Secretary of State’s office has been contacted by an increasing number of individuals who own a vehicle and are unhoused when the town in which they reside will not collect their excise tax. Unhoused individuals cannot provide proof of residing in a particular town with a rent receipt or utility bill, for example. In many cases these individuals are living in their vehicles. They want to comply with the law and register their vehicles to avoid driving an unregistered vehicle or possibly having their vehicle impounded because it is not registered. Currently, unhoused individuals residing in Maine do not have an alternative way to pay excise tax and register their vehicles when the municipality they live in refuses.

BMV already collects excise tax for Maine residents living in unorganized territories and those who are part of the address confidentiality program. To implement this, there would be very minimal impact to BMV so there will not be a fiscal note.

Since this law would allow, but not require, unhoused Maine residents to pay excise tax to the Secretary of State, a town could still choose to collect the excise tax.

I strongly urge you to pass this bill so unhoused Maine residents may comply with the law and register their vehicles.

Thank you for your time and I would be happy to answer your questions.