

40 Coburn Rd,
Manchester,
CT 06040
860-202-0034

March 9, 2010

Transportation Committee,
Room 2300,
Legislative Office Building,
Hartford,
CT 06106

Dear Senator DeFronzo, Rep. Guerrero and members of the Transportation Committee,

I am writing this letter today in support of bill, HB 5461 – (AN ACT PROVIDING ADDITIONAL TIME FOR THE REPAIR AND FREE REINSPECTION OF A MOTOR VEHICLE FOLLOWING THE FAILURE OF SUCH VEHICLE TO COMPLY WITH EMISSIONS STANDARDS) that is to be heard at the public hearing on Wednesday, March 10th.

The reason why I am writing is because sometime around August 2009 I had to take my car to be emissions tested. Unfortunately it failed. I took it to a friend of mine who ran a diagnostic test and in his opinion it was something that we could fix over a weekend. My problem was that I work in Enfield and need my car every day for work and so it was about 4-5 weeks before I could get it repaired and retested. As it was past 30 days, I not only had to pay the \$20 test fee again, but also had to pay a \$20 late fee. Unfortunately it failed again. This time I took it to a mechanic who informed me that it needed two oxygen sensors replacing, and that parts and labor would be about \$500. There is a reason that I drive a car that is 11 years old and has 170,000 miles on it, it is because I can't afford a new one. This puts people like myself in a "catch 22" situation, the less money you have, the more likely you are to drive an older car, and therefore the more likely that it will fail the emissions test, which means that it will need repairs that there is no money available to pay for.

As a law abiding citizen, I didn't just want to forget it and then be in trouble when I tried to re-register my car, so I started to save my money until I had enough to pay the repair bill. Unfortunately this took a few months. With the country in a recession and people being laid off, I didn't want to use a credit card in case I was laid off and couldn't repay it, and also because I didn't want to rack up huge interest charges. Once the car was fixed, I took it back to the testing facility and it passed. But again I was charged a \$20 test fee and a \$20 late fee. In total I had paid over \$500 to get my car fixed, and \$100 in test and late fees. I think that it is unfair to charge people the late fee when they are trying to follow the rules. I didn't mind paying the test fees again, as each time I was outside the 30 day grace period, but it was adding insult to injury, when I had to pay \$40 in late fees, just because I didn't have the cash available to repair my car right away. I understand that late fees are suitable to scofflaws, who ignore their test date, and/or decide not to repair their vehicle, but in the instances where the person is doing their best to abide by the law, I think it is unfair to penalize them with late fees on top of having to re-pay the test fee.

Sincerely,

Neil Whittaker