

TESTIMONY SUBMITTED

BY

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REGARDING

THE

**PROPOSED BILL No. 160: AN ACT CONCERNING THE AVAILABILITY OF
AUTOMOBILE DIAGNOSTIC CODES**

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE on GENERAL LAW

OF THE

CONNECTICUT GENERAL ASSEMBLY

February 22, 2011

I am the Wholesale Sales Manager for NAPA Connecticut serving the entire State from our Distribution Center located in Middletown. I am a life long resident of Connecticut growing up in Prospect and Waterbury currently residing in Thomaston.

I have spent my entire life in the Automotive Aftermarket. First growing up in and then owning a Parts Store and now working with Independent business owners throughout Connecticut markets. Currently as Wholesale Manager I work with 82 stores and their servicing dealer customers to grow better relationships and offer marketing and training opportunities so they can grow their businesses and offer their customers complete professional service from drop off to pick up. I spend most days visiting family owned and operated Independent Stores and Service Repair Dealers who regularly spend thousands of dollars annually on new technology updates to better equip their businesses and offer a more comprehensive service level to their customers.

A major concern is that as the OE automakers will continue their practice of holding back complete diagnostic repair information from the automotive aftermarket and the independent businesses in the State and in your Districts will struggle to survive.

Without Right to Repair legislation Connecticut consumers will be forced back to the OE Dealers where prices are in most cases more than 30% higher and located away from the local Independent repair facilities they may have a relationship with. Challenges will be made that a Right to Repair legislation would drive jobs out of America, all of the OE manufactures have oversees facilities and have already taken jobs out of the Country. A challenge will be made that this is a parts bill and not a repair bill and that the parts suppliers will "highjack" proprietary and intellectual information and manufacture their own products, there is not a single reported case of this happening. At the end of the day the Independent repair facility just wants to complete the job in their service bay.

Proposed Bill S160 clearly states that automobile manufacture diagnostic codes are made available and makes no mention of design and on board computer manufacture codes. The goal would be to level the playing field with regard to diagnostic and initializing codes and create an environment where fair trade and consumer choice rule the day.

A good example of this would be that of a late model Audi that came into a shop in Waterbury recently with symptoms that included head lights which would not work, windows which would not shut and a horn which would not blow. The shop identified a faulty body controller module that was getting wet due to a plugged drain hole. The shop was told that only Audi could initialize a new module and the shop owner reluctantly sent the car on to the Dealer where the customer was charged \$1400 for the complete repair. After speaking with the vehicle owner the shop contacted the dealer and found that they could have purchased the module for approximately \$395 and with labor the customer would have been out the door for approximately \$750, the only problem was that it still would have had to go back to the dealer to have the module initialized.

The OE manufactures have gone through some of the worst economic conditions in recent history, many have survived and many more have vanished. News headlines are continually filled with the announcement of recalls, 20 million plus in 2010 alone, that shakes the trust of the driving public and without legislation like S160 we give those consumers who have valid concerns no choice.

Earlier I stated that I represent 82 NAPA stores and I visit them all several times a year. During these visits I go into the field and visit the stores Independent Service and Repair Dealers as well. I estimate that I see 500 locations a year covering all corners of the State. These shops are large and small and on average employ 6 to 8 people, from their specific communities, add to that the tax dollars and revenue from licenses, fees and insurances the Automotive Aftermarket in Connecticut is a strong partner in job creation (1.4% of the workforce) and State income with more than 3 billion dollars in sales.

In 2010 I started visiting Connecticut's Congressional Representatives bringing in Independent owners to share the issues they have in their businesses and to gain their support of the National Right to Repair Bill HR2057. Representatives John Larson and Joe Courtney have both added their names as Co-Sponsors along with that of former Senator Christopher Dodd. They have recognized the need for this type of legislation.

We believe that passing Bill S160 will help create an environment that provides Connecticut consumers with multiple choices for automotive repairs.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and I have attached a summary of Connecticut's Automotive Aftermarket for your review. I am available to answer any questions.