

Testimony of Robert Hensley of Simsbury, Connecticut  
Joint Standing Committee on Transportation Public Hearing  
State Legislative Office Building,  
Hartford, Connecticut

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Good morning Representative Guerrera, Senator Boucher, Representative O'Dea, members of the committee my name is Robert Hensley of Simsbury Connecticut, I am here to testify in opposition to SB 198 An Act Concerning The Purchase of Electric Vehicles and House Bill 6682 An Act Concerning The Licensing of New and Used Car Dealers.

I do not sell cars for a living; I am not connected with the auto retail business other than as a consumer. I do however own a small business in Avon, Connecticut. I am here to relate a true story to you about my experience after buying a car from Mitchell SAAB in my home town of Simsbury....I guess you could call this my SOBB story, one that may very well reflect the case for many other SAAB customers who purchased vehicles just prior to SAAB's bankruptcy. In 2010 after purchasing a SAAB 9-5, I discovered what happens when a big multinational auto maker goes bankrupt. SAAB Motors - a highly respected, old established European car maker suddenly and without much warning went out of business. This was around the time that GM and Chrysler were going through their own bankruptcy reorganization; SAAB, unfortunately for me and others, was going through bankruptcy liquidation. I and many other Connecticut and US consumers who purchased a new state of the art SAAB, were shocked when SAAB went out of business. Everyone, including dealers, was left holding the bag at the end of a very long

list of stockholders, Wall Street banks and creditors. Customers, like me, were facing the scary prospect of no factory warranty, no replacement parts, and no service. Dealers, I assume, were left with millions of dollars of inventory with no viable manufacturers to make parts, order recalls and pay for warranty work. Of course this has happened before. Examples include Saturn, Pontiac, and some legislators may remember the Yugo, the Daewoo or the DeLorean, just to mention a few.

I want to tell you, that if it wasn't for the Mitchell family and the local Mitchell Auto Group, we would have been left out in the cold by SAAB Corporation and the bankruptcy courts. The Mitchell family has been selling cars in the Farmington Valley for 3 generations and although the Mitchells lost their SAAB store, they continued to take care of their customers. They even picked up and helped customers from other single stand alone SAAB franchises in southern New England. The Mitchell family keeps a SAAB facility open even to this day. They backed up the cars they sold and stepped in to assume obligations which legally belonged to the bankrupt SAAB Corporation.

My new car was serviced and maintained by Mitchell Auto Group as though SAAB was still around. When my new SAAB developed a mysterious electrical problem, I had it into the dealership several times. Again the dealer took care of me. I was, frankly, scared about the fact that I had a new car with some undiagnosed problem and NO WARRANTY. That is a very concerning situation. Mitchell stepped in to help me work through the problem and, in the end, helped me "get out of the car" and helped me "get into a different car" at-I am sure-a loss to them.

Without that help, I would have been lost. But, because of their help, I was taken care of and had someone who I knew would be my advocate.

Had Mark Mitchell the owner of this SAAB dealership been corporately owned by SAAB of America, which is what I understand Mr. Musk and Tesla are asking you to allow in this legislation, the Hensley family would have been left with no one to talk to concerning what many would call a very significant investment.

I saw a quote the other day by the Senator who is proposing SB198 the Tesla bill. He said something to the effect that Tesla is a big company and it would not go belly up. All I can say is...tell that to the owners of vehicles made by Saturn, the old General Motors, Chrysler and SAAB ...we never thought that our manufacturer would have financial problems either.

I ask you to think very carefully about letting Tesla or any other big company that steps into our state and wants to cut the safety net Connecticut law provides to its citizens under the franchise system.

Even with heavy government subsidies and environmental credit Tesla still has not made a profit and its sales have been declining not rising. I hope you will think carefully about this bill, your primary obligation is to look out for the consumer first. A stand-alone Tesla corporate store is a risk that you should not ask your constituents to bear.

Look. I am a small business owner. We try to do business with other local small businesses. We work very hard to take care of our customers. Many times this means that we must work with the large companies to help our client. **I would rather rely on locally licensed and locally owned business that in many cases are 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> generation dealerships. They are here to stay and we know where they are-they are in our community. We know where to find them when something goes wrong.**

So, my suggestion for Mr. Musk would be to try the dealership distribution system. He may find that it's a great tool.

