



March 12, 2024

Representative Jesse Sumner, Chair

House Labor and Commerce Committee State Capitol, Room 421

Juneau, AK 99801

RE: HB233 - Relating to rates and time allowances for required motor vehicle work

I am writing in support of HB233.

My name is Ben Schauble, I moved to Fairbanks in 2011 and I am a professor at UAF CTC along with owner/operator of High Tech Automotive. I have been teaching the automotive technician program for 8 years. Before joining UAF CTC, I was a master automotive technician at multiple dealerships for over a decade including in the Fairbanks area.

In the beginning, 4 years of school, followed by specific advanced level training from multiple manufacturers. This allowed me to excel in my career. Without this training my success would have been greatly hindered. I prided myself on achieving the highest grades and as many certifications as possible. As my career progressed, I learned having a plethora of certifications has its drawbacks in this industry. I chose to stay with the manufacturer/dealership lifestyle for the first half of my career. Working at the dealerships provided the highest level of training and tools and specialty equipment that allowed the highest quality repairs to be performed. While having a long list of certifications in my resume, it aids me in employment eligibility and potential pay scale increases, it also increases the amount of warranty work I will be performing. Dealership technicians have long been plagued by a dual rate pay scale where the manufacturer pays substantially less hours than the customer would to do the exact same job. In the dealership world, you MUST be certified in that area of repair by that manufacturer to be eligible to receive pay for the repair in that system. This is a good requirement as this shows you are trained properly to work safely on that system and perform a competent repair. This same level of training is NOT required if the customer is paying out of pocket, though it should be. Since the number of hours paid by the manufacturer is lower than the amount paid by the customer, the more certified you are the more lower paying warranty work you will be doing. This difference entices technicians to not want further training, leaving them in a situation where they only work on customer paying vehicles with less knowledge than what is desirable. Throughout my career I was typically one of the highest certified, most capable, and knowledgeable technicians in the shop. However, my high level of certifications led to me doing more of the "low paying" warranty work. While my hourly pay was generally higher than my colleagues, my gross pay was substantially lower due to the manufacturer not paying the full hours. This left under-educated technicians doing sub-par work for way more money. This is what eventually pushed me out of the dealership world.

The last few years of my dealership life, I was in charge of mentoring and teaching new technicians the proper way things were supposed to be repaired, this led to my new career of teaching. As a professor of the Automotive Technology Program at UAF CTC my role is to train entry level technicians coming into the field. Vehicles of today are highly complex and sophisticated and require a high level of ongoing training and knowledge. Our program is career and workforce development oriented which means we help assist with placing students in local technician jobs at both dealership and independent repair facilities throughout our community. Students are encouraged to seek employment at local dealerships as they provide the highest level of ongoing training. However, it is increasingly difficult to incentivize students to pursue work at dealerships in fear of lower pay. With passing this bill, mentors and teachers will no longer have hesitation encouraging their students to seek dealership employment to better their skills and knowledge knowing the pay is the same and high level of training and certification is valued equally.

As a small business owner of a local independent repair shop, I would prefer to employ someone with technical training and dealership experience and many certifications showing they have the knowledge and skills to perform their job to the highest level possible. It has never made sense to me as a high valued, knowledgeable technician, why I was getting paid less than my not as knowledgeable technicians to perform the same repairs in the same shop. It is expensive for dealerships to train these technicians, once they get them trained and certified it does not offset the high operating costs involved as effectively as it should with lower pay rates. This directly effects the livelihood of the local technician and in turn our local communities. Equal pay rates for equal jobs, is what this bill seeks to address.

Thank you for your time.

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