

From: Alex F
Sent: Tuesday, July 29, 2025 2:47 PM
To: Curtis, Catherine <Catherine.Curtis@maine.gov>
Subject: Comment Submission - SP 498 – LD 1209

EXTERNAL: This email originated from outside of the State of Maine Mail System. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Deputy Secretary Curtis,

My name is Alex F and I am a full-time resident of Kennebunkport. I am writing in regard to SP 498 – LD 1209, “Resolve, to Establish a Working Group to Study the Use and Safety of Lightweight and Fuel-efficient Vehicles.” I want to commend the state’s leadership for recognizing the need for a more thoughtful, evidence-based approach to regulating small imported vehicles, including Japanese domestic market (JDM) vehicles such as Kei trucks.

As you know, Maine’s prohibition on the registration of certain small, imported vehicles has had an outsized impact on collectors, rural Mainers, and environmentally conscious drivers alike. These vehicles, while small, are designed with efficiency and utility in mind. The Kei class was created in post-war Japan to promote compact, low-emission transportation. With engines capped at 660cc, Kei vehicles offer remarkable fuel economy, minimal emissions, and a small road footprint, all features that should be embraced in the face of growing concerns around climate change and fuel consumption.

It’s disheartening that a driver can legally register and operate a 1970s-era V8 muscle car or a lifted pickup with outdated safety features, while being denied the opportunity to register a 1990s-era Kei truck that was explicitly engineered to meet strict environmental and safety standards. This regulatory inconsistency undermines both road safety logic and consumer trust.

Moreover, the ban may inadvertently encourage vehicle owners to seek registration in states with more permissive laws - New Hampshire, Montana, and others - thereby removing potential tax and registration revenues from Maine. It also encourages less transparency in enforcement and compliance, which could negatively affect road safety and insurance standards.

While concerns around crashworthiness are valid (though, ultimately, broadly unwarranted), they should be weighed against vehicle usage patterns. Many of these vehicles are used in rural or agricultural settings, driven at low speeds, and/or registered

as antiques or limited-use vehicles, further reducing any meaningful safety risk to the public.

For all these reasons, I strongly support the legislature's resolve to convene a working group to reevaluate this policy and consider a more equitable and nuanced framework for registering lightweight, fuel-efficient, and imported vehicles. I urge your office to ensure that this process includes voices from collectors, small farmers, environmental advocates, and automotive safety experts who can provide a well-rounded perspective.

Thank you for your continued service to the people of Maine and for your dedication to road safety and consumer protection. I am confident that with your leadership, Maine can find a balanced approach that promotes both public safety and personal freedom while encouraging environmental responsibility.

Sincerely,

Alex