

Testimony of Paul Koerner
In Opposition, to
RB 7097- An Act Concerning the Licensing of New and Used Car Dealers
Transportation Public Hearing
Legislative Office Building,
Hartford, Connecticut
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Good morning My name is Paul Koerner. I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I am a GM Certified World Class technician at Jackson Chevrolet which basically means that I've achieved the highest level of training GM has to offer. This training is in ALL areas of motor vehicle repair for GM, including EV and Hybrid designs. I am also well versed in Chevrolet's halo vehicle, the Corvette. I travel to various locations across the country to give seminars on the high tech features of this highly engineered sports car I'm here because it is important for you to know that when a company like Tesla says that franchised dealers' auto technicians can't work on technologically advanced automobiles it is just not so. I and thousands of my fellow Technicians at GM, Ford, JEEP and all the other 32 auto manufacturers licensed in this state are exceptionally well educated and very proficient in our field.

I've read extensively on the Tesla product and the issues at hand and have some opinions based on the data I've reviewed. I've seen that Tesla has been using the argument that their product is different than that produced by other manufacturers and therefore the product cannot be sold through dealerships and they need an exception. I couldn't disagree more and frankly find the argument rather arrogant and condescending to myself and the fine technicians and dealership personnel that I work with every day.

A big part of my job in the service department is to make sure that the customer is well represented and gets everything that is eligible to be covered under warranty. Warranty is an expense to these large manufactures and they do try to control expense. We at Jackson Chevrolet and all dealers go to bat for customers regularly, fighting on behalf of the customer based on the diagnosis we've done on the vehicle. It would be crazy to remove this support for the customer. A corporate-owned store would have a vested interest in rejecting such claims.

Just a little about how NOT different Tesla technology is compared to the product franchised dealers are already selling.

Technology:

#1, Tesla uses Panasonic 18650 lithium ion technology which has been around since pre-2000 as a replacement for the NiMH battery in laptops. Less costs due to previous designs being used. More cells required for equivalent power output. Source: MIT technology review

#2, GM uses Prismatic pouch cell technology that has been used since 2011 and other manufacturers. More power per cell, less complexity in battery package assembly. Source: GM service information and MIT technology review

Charging Systems:

Tesla charging ports can only be used by a Tesla vehicle. Unlike all the other 32 manufacturers use the same design as industry standard J1772 that any EV can use regardless of manufacturer. Tesla set itself up to be exclusionary. All other EV owners of Ford, GM, Mercedes and more than 30 other brands can't use Tesla's charging stations. For the record, the chargers at Jackson Chevrolet, like almost all other franchise dealerships is open to the public and most a no cost. So, for anyone who thinks Tesla operates in the interest of environmentally friendly principals this is a good indicator that this is not the case.

- Supercharging systems use a 480 AC volt to high voltage DC direct charging system to enable 30 min charge direct into battery pack
- Fast charging from other manufacturers including GM require 240 AC to high voltage DC direct using J1772 charge port.

Result: More flexibility in fast charging other makes and models

Vehicle Design

- Tesla is using aluminum with high strength steel frames with battery packages being used as a structural 'backbone' to the frame.
- Structural backbones to strengthen frames have been used in many forms since 1997, Ex: Corvette, Porsche 928S4, Volt and the new for 2017 Bolt EV. This structural characteristic is not new.
- BMW i3 is using an industry leading CFRP(carbon fiber reinforced plastic) for its occupant safety cage, and many cutting edge technologies which lead to an industry article stating it was "The most advanced motor vehicle produced" This statement bears repeating. The BMW i3 is THE most ADVANCED motor vehicle produced today and franchise dealers are selling them and repairing them.

I point out these design issues because all cars need repair work. Winter potholes bend frames, fender benders damage all sorts of components, tires wear out and franchised dealership-trained technicians fix them all the time. Don't be dazzled by Tesla's product, it's very nice, so is the BMWi8, but it's not a reason to throw out the franchise system.

In closing, I urge you to look at the facts of what goes on in dealerships today. Our Connecticut dealers employ professionals that are at the top of their trade. They are capable of selling and servicing the most complex of vehicles produced today – in fact we're doing that every day. The direct sales model will cost jobs as Tesla centralizes their operations in California and at the service hubs they create. Direct sales will also remove the dealer who acts as a buffer and advocate between the manufacturer and the consumer.

Thank you for your time. I am happy to answer any questions.