



March 5, 2024

Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Senate Bill 870, Vehicle Laws - Electric Vehicles - Weight Limits

Position: Favorable, with amendments

Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Members of the Committee:

Nikola Corporation appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony on Senate Bill 870, Vehicle Laws - Electric Vehicles - Weight. For background, Nikola Corporation is a designer and manufacturer of zero-tailpipe emission battery electric vehicles (BEV) and hydrogen fuel cell electric vehicles (FCEV), electric vehicle drivetrains, vehicle components, and hydrogen infrastructure. Nikola, as a company that specializes in Class 8 trucks, is a pioneer among original equipment manufacturers producing zero-emission vehicles as well as introducing fueling assets that are available today to help support these newer technologies. Nikola currently has two vehicles available for purchase, the Tre BEV, which has a range of up to 330 miles, and the Tre FCEV which has a range of up to 500 miles.

As we engage with fleets in Maryland and across the country, among the challenges to full market acceptance and adoption of zero-emission trucks is the overall gross vehicle weight resulting from the additional weight burden from the batteries and/or hydrogen tanks which support the propulsion of these vehicles. The weight of these critical components, which has yet to become more efficient, impacts both the weight of the zero-emissions tractor and decreases the payload capacity for customers to continue at the same level as their internal combustion engine operations.

To spur the near-term adoption of heavy-duty ZEVs, implementing a higher weight allowance for operating these vehicles will help fleets overcome a critical barrier which prevents them from confidently purchasing zero-emission trucks. Despite the readiness and availability of these vehicles today, Nikola has received overwhelming feedback as we engage in sales discussions with potential customers regarding the reduction in payload that fleets face with higher vehicle weights. Without measures such as Senate Bill 870, the current heavy-duty ZEVs on the market cannot meet diesel parity nor total cost of ownership economics.

Nikola would like to voice support for the intent of Senate Bill 870 and offer a suggestion that would make the bill inclusive of both battery electric and fuel cell electric vehicles. The bill currently reads:

ANY PLUG-IN ELECTRIC VEHICLE OR OTHER VEHICLE PROPELLED TO A SIGNIFICANT EXTENT BY AN ELECTRIC MOTOR THAT DRAWS ELECTRICITY FROM A BATTERY SHALL BE ALLOWED UP TO AN ADDITIONAL 2,000 POUNDS TOTAL IN GROSS, AXLE, TANDEM, AND BRIDGE FORMULA WEIGHT LIMITS.



Battery-electric vehicles and hydrogen FCEVs both have a vital role in the transition to a zero-carbon future. Both of the zero-emission class-8 tractors that we offer today are electric vehicles that have higher curb weights than their diesel-powered counterparts. Nikola respectfully asks that SB 870 be amended to include fuel cell electric vehicles in the weight exemption language. We propose the following language which would be inclusive of both BEVs and FCEVs:

~~“ANY PLUG-IN ELECTRIC~~ **ZERO EMISSION VEHICLE, AS DEFINED [IN MD. CODE, TRANSP. § 23-206.4](#), OR OTHER VEHICLE PROPELLED TO A SIGNIFICANT EXTENT BY AN ELECTRIC MOTOR THAT DRAWS ELECTRICITY FROM A BATTERY SHALL BE ALLOWED UP TO AN ADDITIONAL 2,000 POUNDS TOTAL IN GROSS, AXLE, TANDEM, AND BRIDGE FORMULA WEIGHT LIMITS.**

We appreciate the opportunity to offer testimony on this important bill.

Thank you,

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