



Testimony to the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

SB 834 – Vehicle Laws – Manufacturers and Dealers – Prices Listed on Dealer Websites

Position: Favorable

The Honorable Will Smith
Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East, Miller Senate Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chairman Smith and Committee Members,

My name is Rob Smith, and I am the President of Fitzgerald Auto Malls, a company that has been family-founded but is now proudly employee-owned. Our 1,300 Maryland employees and their families are committed to one fundamental principle in car sales—transparency. At Fitzgerald Auto Malls, we believe in upfront, honest pricing. The price you see is the price you pay. That's what consumers expect, and it's what they deserve.

For years, we have built our business on the foundation of trust. As highlighted in Wards Auto, research consistently shows that transparency is the key driver of consumer confidence and loyalty in the automotive industry. (ATTACHMMMENT)

Yet, outdated manufacturer policies—like the Minimum Allowable Advertised Price (MAAP)—work directly against that transparency by artificially inflating the prices consumers see online. This practice is anti-consumer in an era where customers expect honesty, not hidden pricing games.

Under MAAP rules, dealers are prohibited from listing the true transaction prices of vehicles online, often forcing prices to be displayed at \$1,000, \$1,500, or more above what a customer would actually pay in the showroom. Worse still, **manufacturers penalize dealers for even suggesting that additional discounts may be available.** Dealers who break these rules risk losing crucial manufacturer incentives—creating an uneven playing field where some dealers can offer lower prices due to incentives, while others cannot.

Manufacturers often claim that dealers are free to set their own prices, but they fail to acknowledge how MAAP manipulates that freedom. While a dealer can list a real price ON THE CAR ON THE LOT, they take cannot do the same on the internet. A dealership that follows the rules and honestly advertises prices is at a competitive disadvantage compared to one that quietly offers hidden showroom discounts. Why should car buyers be forced to navigate a system that obscures real pricing instead of providing clear, honest numbers from the start?

SB 834 does not prohibit MAAP enforcement outright, but it does take a modest and necessary step toward ensuring that consumers are at least informed that lower prices may be available. It simply prevents manufacturers from retaliating against dealers for adding language that truthfully states: “The advertised price of a vehicle is the manufacturer’s Minimum Allowable Advertised Price and that the dealer may offer a lower price.”

This bill isn’t about bait-and-switch tactics or deceptive advertising—it’s about basic fairness. It allows dealers to communicate openly with customers, restoring trust in a process that should be built on honesty, not secrecy.

So, I ask this committee: Why would anyone oppose telling consumers the truth?

At Fitzgerald Auto Malls, we stand for fairness, transparency, and trust. We urge you to support SB 834 and help ensure that Maryland consumers receive the honest pricing information they deserve.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Robert M. Syll".

President, Fitzgerald Auto Malls