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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**NJ Right to Repair Act Passes Assembly Consumer Affairs Committee**

*Bill requires vehicle manufacturers to provide access to essential repair software  
NJGCA Members Keith Krehel and Meer Fazaldin provide testimony to the committee*

Sal Risalvato, Executive Director of the New Jersey Gasoline, Convenience, Automotive Association (**NJGCA**), released the following statement today, after yesterday's vote in the Assembly Consumer Affairs Committee to approve NJ's Right to Repair legislation:

"For years now, New Jersey auto technicians and consumer advocate groups have been fighting to pass legislation which would give independent auto repair shops the opportunity to purchase diagnostic, service, or repair information from manufacturers, so that the small business owner is on an even playing field with the manufacturer. All too often I have members that must tell their loyal customers that they cannot complete a vehicle's repair -- not because their mechanics lack the technical ability to fix the problem -- but because even after a part is correctly installed, it will not function properly until certain codes and software are downloaded to the vehicle's computer system. This information is currently protected by manufacturers and not shared with independent repair shops in order to make it more difficult for independent mechanics and technicians to compete with manufacturers and car dealerships, despite the consumers' wishes."

Risalvato continued, "Consumers are increasingly losing the freedom to get their car repaired where they want. Consumers should be allowed to engage with the free market and decide the best place to get their vehicle repaired, based on their needs -- do they need the absolute lowest price, do they want someplace close to their home or office, do

they want to take it to a friend or relative who is a mechanic, are they willing to pay a bit more to take it to a mechanic they trust, etc... Without Right to Repair, consumers have lost their ability to make these decisions. The manufacturers will eventually have a virtual monopoly on auto repair and consumers will be forced to take their vehicle into dealerships only, which in most cases will be both more expensive and less convenient."

NJGCA Member Meer Fazaldin, a Master Certified ASE auto technician who has owned two repair shops for over 35 years, testified at yesterday's hearing and shared his experiences with the Committee. "We have a good base of customers that trust us and would like to bring their car to us, leave it for the day when they go to work, and by the end of the day when they come back, the car is ready for them to pick up. A lot of times we know how to fix the car, we get the parts from the dealer, but we don't have the software to reset it, in order for it to operate normally. It is very frustrating. Sometimes it is just simple maintenance, like an oil change. We can't even reset the service reminder light. Most of our customers don't want to bring their cars back to the dealers because of the inconvenience, not because of the expense. They trust us, and they would like their car to be repaired by us. When we tell them, embarrassingly, that we can't do it because we don't have the software, sometimes they have a feeling that we are not competent, which is not the truth. We are very competent. We can do repairs just as well, maybe even better than the dealerships."

Risalvato encouraged the Committee to look to the situation in Massachusetts for proof of Right to Repair's importance. "The fight in Massachusetts has been contentious for several years now, but legislators were finally able to make significant progress by threatening to put the issues before voters, who favored Right to Repair by a massive margin. Facing near certain defeat, the auto manufacturers and car dealers agreed to compromise and pass a bill in the Massachusetts Legislature. However, the compromise agreement wasn't reached in time, and though the Legislature passed the bill and the Governor signed it, it was too late to remove the referendum from the ballot. Despite the fact that it was now unnecessary to pass the Right to Repair referendum on the ballot, voters wound up not only passing Right to Repair, but doing so in historic proportions. It received over 2.3 million votes in favor, with less than 400,000 against, meaning that it won 86% of the vote -- the largest landslide ever for a public question in Massachusetts history."

"As you can see, consumers are demanding the opportunity to choose where they take their car to get repaired. Right now we are beholden to the automotive manufacturing industry. On the national level, the manufacturers, dealers, and those representing auto repair shops and their allies have been discussing an agreement to apply throughout the US. Unfortunately, the deadline for a national agreement came and went several months ago, and consumers are still at the mercy of the car dealerships and auto manufacturers. It is time that we see a Right to Repair enacted in New Jersey, and I am grateful to the Assembly Consumer Affairs Committee for, once again, taking the first step toward making that happen," Risalvato concluded.

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