

# MRS Title 10, Chapter 204: BUSINESS PRACTICES BETWEEN MOTOR VEHICLE MANUFACTURERS, DISTRIBUTORS AND DEALERS

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Subchapter 1: REGULATION OF BUSINESS PRACTICES  
BETWEEN MOTOR VEHICLE MANUFACTURERS, DISTRIBUTORS  
AND DEALERS HEADING: PL 2003, c. 356, §2 (new)

**10 §1171. Definitions**

As used in this chapter, unless the context otherwise indicates, the following words shall have the following meanings: [1975, c. 573, (NEW).]

**1. Distributor or wholesaler.** "Distributor" or "wholesaler" means any person who sells or distributes new or used motor vehicles to motor vehicle dealers or who maintains distributor representatives within this State.

[ 1975, c. 573, (NEW) .]

**1-A. Designated family member.** "Designated family member" means the spouse, child, grandchild, parent, brother or sister of the owner of a new motor vehicle dealer who, in the case of the owner's death, is entitled to inherit the ownership interest in the new motor vehicle dealer under the terms of the owner's will, or who, in the case of an incapacitated owner of a new motor vehicle dealer, has been appointed by a court as the legal representative of the new motor vehicle dealer's property.

[ 1981, c. 331, §1 (NEW) .]

**1-B. Broker.** "Broker" means a person who, for a fee, commission or other valuable consideration, arranges or offers to arrange a transaction involving the sale, for purposes other than resale, of a new motor vehicle and who is not:

A. A franchised dealer or a bona fide employee of a franchised dealer when acting on behalf of a franchised dealer; [1997, c. 521, §1 (NEW).]

B. A manufacturer or distributor or a bona fide employee of a manufacturer or distributor when acting on behalf of a manufacturer or distributor; or [1997, c. 521, §1 (NEW).]

C. At any point in the transaction the bona fide owner of the vehicle involved in the transaction. [1997, c. 521, §1 (NEW).]

[ 1997, c. 521, §1 (NEW) .]

**1-C. Board.** "Board" means the Maine Motor Vehicle Franchise Board created pursuant to section 1187.

[ 2003, c. 356, §3 (NEW) .]

**2. Distributor branch.** "Distributor branch" means a branch office maintained by a distributor or wholesaler who or which sells or distributes new or used motor vehicles to motor vehicle dealers.

[ 1975, c. 573, (NEW) .]

**3. Distributor representative.** "Distributor representative" means a representative employed by a distributor branch, distributor or wholesaler.

[ 1975, c. 573, (NEW) .]

**4. Factory branch.** "Factory branch" means a branch office maintained by a manufacturer which manufactures or assembles motor vehicles for sale to distributors or motor vehicle dealers or which is maintained for directing and supervising the representatives of the manufacturer.

[ 1975, c. 573, (NEW) . ]

**5. Factory representative.** "Factory representative" means a representative employed by a manufacturer or employed by a factory branch for the purpose of making or promoting the sale of motor vehicles or for supervising, servicing, instructing or contracting motor vehicle dealers or prospective motor vehicle dealers.

[ 1975, c. 573, (NEW) . ]

**6. Franchise.** "Franchise" means an oral or written arrangement for a definite or indefinite period in which a manufacturer, distributor or wholesaler grants to a motor vehicle dealer a license to use a trade name, service mark or related characteristic, and in which there is a community of interest in the marketing of motor vehicles or services related thereto at wholesale, retail, leasing or otherwise.

[ 1975, c. 573, (NEW) . ]

**7. Franchisee.** "Franchisee" means a motor vehicle dealer to whom a franchise is offered or granted.

[ 1975, c. 573, (NEW) . ]

**8. Franchisor.** "Franchisor" means a manufacturer, distributor or wholesaler who grants a franchise to a motor vehicle dealer.

[ 1975, c. 573, (NEW) . ]

**9. Fraud.** "Fraud" includes in addition to its normal legal connotation the following: an intentionally false representation; a promise or representation not made honestly and in good faith; and an intentional failure to disclose a material fact.

[ 1997, c. 521, §2 (AMD) . ]

**9-A. Good faith.** "Good faith" means honesty in fact and the observation of reasonable commercial standards of fair dealing in the trade as is defined and interpreted in the Uniform Commercial Code, Title 11, section 2-103, subsection 1, paragraph B.

[ 1981, c. 331, §2 (NEW) . ]

**10. Manufacturer.** "Manufacturer" means a person, partnership, firm, association, corporation or trust, resident or nonresident, who manufactures or assembles new motor vehicles or imports for distribution through distributors of motor vehicles or any partnership, firm, association, joint venture, corporation or trust, resident or nonresident, that is controlled by the manufacturer. The term "manufacturer" includes the terms "franchisor," "distributor," "distributor branch," "factory branch" and "factory representative."

[ 1997, c. 521, §3 (AMD) . ]

**11. Motor vehicle.** "Motor vehicle" means any motor driven vehicle, except motorcycles, required to be registered under Title 29-A, chapter 5.

[ 1997, c. 473, §1 (AMD) . ]

**12. Motor vehicle dealer.** "Motor vehicle dealer" means a person other than a manufacturer, distributor, distributor branch, distributor representative, factory branch or factory representative who sells or solicits or advertises the sale of new or used motor vehicles. "Motor vehicle dealer" does not include receivers, trustees, administrators, executors, guardians or other persons appointed by or acting under judgment, decree or order of any court or public officers while performing their duties as public officers.

[ 1997, c. 521, §4 (AMD) .]

**13. New motor vehicle.** "New motor vehicle" means a motor vehicle that has not been previously sold to any person except a distributor, wholesaler or motor vehicle dealer for resale by a franchise.

[ 1997, c. 521, §4 (AMD) .]

**14. Person.** "Person" means a natural person, corporation, partnership, trust or other entity, and, in case of an entity, it shall include any other entity in which it has a majority interest or effectively controls as well as the individual officers, directors and other persons in active control of the activities of each such entity.

[ 1975, c. 573, (NEW) .]

**15. Sale.** "Sale" means the issuance, transfer, agreement for transfer, exchange, pledge, hypothecation, mortgage in any form, whether by transfer in trust or otherwise, of any motor vehicle or interest therein or of any franchise related thereto; and any option, subscription or other contract, or solicitation looking to a sale, or offer or attempt to sell in any form, whether spoken or written. A gift or delivery of any motor vehicle or franchise with respect thereto with or as a bonus on account of the sale of anything shall be deemed a sale of such motor vehicle or franchise.

[ 1975, c. 573, (NEW) .]

#### SECTION HISTORY

1975, c. 573, (NEW). 1981, c. 331, §§1-3 (AMD). 1995, c. 65, §A14 (AMD). 1995, c. 65, §§A153,C15 (AFF). 1997, c. 473, §1 (AMD). 1997, c. 521, §§1-4 (AMD). 2003, c. 356, §3 (AMD).

### 10 §1171-A. Corporate affiliates

A franchisor may not use any subsidiary corporation, affiliated corporation, other corporation in which it owns or controls more than 5% of the stock or other corporation, partnership, association or person to accomplish what would otherwise be prohibited conduct under this chapter on the part of the franchisor. This section does not limit the right of any entity included within the scope of this section to engage in reasonable and appropriate business practices in accordance with the usage of the trade in which it is engaged. [1997, c. 521, §5 (NEW).]

#### SECTION HISTORY

1997, c. 521, §5 (NEW).

### 10 §1171-B. Manufacturer; license

**1. License.** Effective January 1, 1999, the Secretary of State may grant a manufacturer license under the following conditions.

A. Except as provided by this section, a person may not engage in business or serve in the capacity of or act as a manufacturer or distributor without obtaining a license for each line make maintained in the State as provided in this section. [2003, c. 434, §1 (AMD); 2003, c. 434, §37 (AFF).]

B. An application for a license for a manufacturer or distributor must be on a form prescribed by the Secretary of State. The applicant shall file a separate application for each separate line make. The application must contain the manufacturer or distributor's address of its principal place of business, the address where notices should be sent and the address of its registered agent in this State and must be accompanied by its annual report and a list of its franchised new motor vehicle dealers in this State. [2003, c. 434, §1 (AMD); 2003, c. 434, §37 (AFF).]

C. All licensees may apply for issuance of a license for each succeeding year by complying with the application process specified by this section and rules of the Secretary of State. A license or renewal of a license is issued subject to provisions of this chapter and rules of the Secretary of State. [1997, c. 521, §5 (NEW).]

D. The annual fee for a license is \$1,500. [2003, c. 434, §1 (AMD); 2003, c. 434, §37 (AFF).]

E. Manufacturers and distributors of motorcycles and recreational vehicles are exempt from the manufacturer licensing requirements. [1999, c. 470, §2 (NEW).]

[ 2003, c. 434, §1 (AMD); 2003, c. 434, §37 (AFF) .]

**2. Sanctions, denial, revocation or suspension of license.** The Secretary of State shall sanction, deny, revoke or suspend a license under the following conditions.

A. The Secretary of State may deny an application for a license, revoke or suspend an outstanding license, place on probation a person whose license has been suspended or reprimand a licensee for any of the following reasons:

(1) Material misrepresentation in any application or other information filed under this section or rules of the Secretary of State; or

(2) Failure to maintain the qualifications for a license. [1997, c. 521, §5 (NEW).]

B. A license may not be denied, revoked or suspended and disciplinary action may not be taken under this section except after a hearing conducted by the Secretary of State in accordance with the Maine Administrative Procedure Act. [1997, c. 521, §5 (NEW).]

[ 1997, c. 521, §5 (NEW) .]

**3. Civil penalty.** If the board determines after a proceeding conducted in accordance with this chapter that a manufacturer or distributor is violating or has violated any provision of this chapter or any rule or order of the board issued pursuant to this chapter, the board shall levy a civil penalty of not less than \$1,000 nor more than \$10,000 for each violation. If the violation involves multiple transactions within a 60-day period, these multiple transactions are deemed a single violation.

In determining the amount of a civil penalty levied under this chapter, the board shall consider:

A. The seriousness of the violation, including but not limited to the nature, circumstances, extent and gravity of the prohibited acts and the harm or potential harm created to the safety of the public; [1997, c. 521, §5 (NEW).]

B. The economic damage to the public caused by the violation; [1997, c. 521, §5 (NEW).]

C. Any previous violations; [1997, c. 521, §5 (NEW).]

D. The amount necessary to deter future violations; [1997, c. 521, §5 (NEW).]

E. Efforts made to correct the violation; and [1997, c. 521, §5 (NEW).]

F. Any other matters that justice may require. [1997, c. 521, §5 (NEW).]

[ 2003, c. 356, §4 (AMD) .]

**4. Rules.** Rules adopted pursuant to this section are routine technical rules pursuant to Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter II-A.

[ 1997, c. 521, §5 (NEW) .]

**5. License fees collected.** License fees collected under subsection 1, paragraph D and subsection 3 are deposited in the Highway Fund.

[ 1997, c. 521, §5 (NEW) .]

SECTION HISTORY

1997, c. 521, §5 (NEW). 1999, c. 470, §2 (AMD). 2003, c. 356, §4 (AMD).  
2003, c. 434, §1 (AMD). 2003, c. 434, §37 (AFF).

## 10 §1172. Advertisements

Any person who engages directly or indirectly in purposeful contacts within this State in connection with the offering or advertising for sale or has business dealings with respect to a motor vehicle within the State shall be subject to this chapter. [1975, c. 573, (NEW) .]

SECTION HISTORY

1975, c. 573, (NEW) .

## 10 §1173. Attorney General and civil remedies

**1. Civil remedies.** Any franchisee or motor vehicle dealer who suffers financial loss of money or property, real or personal, or who has been otherwise adversely affected as a result of the use or employment by a franchisor of an unfair method of competition or an unfair or deceptive act or any practice declared unlawful by this chapter may bring an action for damages and equitable relief, including injunctive relief. When the franchisee or dealer prevails, the court shall award attorney's fees to the franchisee or dealer, regardless of the amount in controversy, and assess costs against the opposing party. For the purpose of the award of attorney's fees and costs, whenever the franchisee or dealer is seeking injunctive or other relief, the franchisee or dealer may be considered to have prevailed when a judgment or other final order providing equitable relief is entered in its favor. A final judgment, order or decree rendered against a person in any civil, criminal or administrative proceeding under the United States antitrust laws, under the Federal Trade Commission Act, under the Maine Revised Statutes or under this chapter is regarded as prima facie evidence against the person subject to the conditions set forth in the United States antitrust laws, 15 United States Code, Section 16.

[ 1997, c. 521, §6 (AMD) .]

SECTION HISTORY

1975, c. 573, (NEW). 1997, c. 521, §6 (AMD) .

## 10 §1173-A. Mediation

*(REPEALED)*

SECTION HISTORY

1997, c. 521, §7 (NEW). 2003, c. 356, §5 (RP) .

## 10 §1174. Prohibited conduct

The following acts shall be deemed unfair methods of competition and unfair and deceptive practices. It shall be unlawful for any: [1975, c. 573, (NEW) .]

**1. Damage to public.** Manufacturer, factory branch, factory representative, distributor or wholesaler, distributor branch, distributor representative or motor vehicle dealer to engage in any action which is arbitrary, in bad faith or unconscionable and which causes damage to any of said parties or to the public.

[ 1975, c. 573, (NEW) . ]

**2. Coercion involving deliveries and orders.** Manufacturer, a distributor, a wholesaler, a distributor branch or division, a factory branch or division, or a wholesale branch or division, or officer, agent or other representative thereof, to coerce or attempt to coerce, any motor vehicle dealer:

A. To order or accept delivery of any motor vehicle or vehicles, appliances, equipment, parts or accessories therefor, or any other commodity or commodities which such motor vehicle dealer has not voluntarily ordered, or to order or accept delivery of any motor vehicle with special features, appliances, accessories or equipment not included in the list price of said motor vehicles as publicly advertised by the manufacturer thereof, or [1975, c. 573, (NEW) . ]

B. To order for any person any parts, accessories, equipment, machinery, tools, appliances or any commodity whatsoever. [1975, c. 573, (NEW) . ]

[ 1975, c. 573, (NEW) . ]

**3. Certain interference in dealer's business.** Manufacturer, distributor, wholesaler, distributor branch or division, factory branch or division, or wholesale branch or division, or officer, agent or other representative thereof:

A. To refuse to deliver in reasonable quantities and within a reasonable time after receipt of a dealer's order to any motor vehicle dealer having a franchise or contractual arrangement for the retail sale of new motor vehicles sold or distributed by that manufacturer, distributor, distributor branch or division, factory branch or division any motor vehicles or parts or accessories to motor vehicles covered by that franchise or contract specifically publicly advertised by that manufacturer, distributor, distributor branch or division, factory branch or division or wholesale branch or division to be available for delivery. The allocation of new motor vehicles in this State must be made on a fair and equitable basis and must consider the needs of those dealerships with a relevant market area radius of more than 5 miles as defined in section 1174-A, subsection 1. The manufacturer has the burden of establishing the fairness of its allocation system. The failure to deliver any motor vehicle is not considered a violation of this chapter if the failure is due to an act of God, work stoppage or delay due to a strike or labor difficulty, shortage of materials, freight embargo or other cause over which the manufacturer, distributor or any agent of the manufacturer or distributor has no control. A separate dealer agreement is not required of a new motor vehicle dealer already a party to a dealer agreement or franchise agreement for the retail sale of any particular new motor vehicle model made or distributed by a manufacturer, distributor, distributor branch or division, factory branch or division, wholesale branch or division or officer, agent or other representative thereof, except that a manufacturer or distributor may require a dealer to purchase special tools or equipment, stock reasonable quantities of certain parts, purchase reasonable quantities of promotional materials or participate in training programs that are reasonably necessary for the dealer to sell or service such a new motor vehicle model. Any special tools, parts or signs not used within 2 years of receipt by the dealer may be returned by the dealer to the manufacturer or distributor for a full refund of cost of those special tools, parts and signs; [1997, c. 521, §8 (AMD) . ]

B. To coerce, or attempt to coerce, a motor vehicle dealer to enter into an agreement with that manufacturer, distributor, distributor branch or division, factory branch or division, wholesale branch or division or officer, agent or other representative thereof, or to do any other act prejudicial to the dealer by threatening to cancel a franchise or a contractual agreement existing between that manufacturer, distributor, distributor branch or division, factory branch or division or wholesale branch or division and that dealer or by threatening or attempting to modify a franchise during the term of the franchise or upon its renewal, if the modification substantially and adversely affects the motor vehicle dealer's rights, obligations, investment or return on investment, without giving 90 days' written notice by certified

mail of the proposed modification to the motor vehicle dealer, unless the modification is required by law or board order. Within the 90-day notice period, the motor vehicle dealer may file with the board and serve notice upon the manufacturer a protest requesting a determination of whether there is good cause for permitting the proposed modification. The manufacturer has the burden of proving good cause. The board shall promptly schedule a hearing and decide the matter within 180 days from the date the protest is filed. Multiple protests pertaining to the same proposed modification must be consolidated for hearing. The proposed modification may not take effect pending the determination of the matter. In determining whether there is good cause for permitting a proposed modification, any relevant factors must be considered, including, but not limited to:

- (1) The reasons for the proposed modification;
- (2) Whether the proposed modification is applied to or affects all motor vehicle dealers in a nondiscriminatory manner;
- (3) Whether the proposed modification will have a substantial and adverse effect upon the motor vehicle dealer's investment or return on investment;
- (4) Whether the proposed modification is in the public interest;
- (5) Whether the proposed modification is necessary to the orderly and profitable distribution; and
- (6) Whether the proposed modification is offset by other modifications beneficial to the motor vehicle dealer.

Notice in good faith to a motor vehicle dealer of that dealer's violation of the terms or provisions of the franchise or contractual agreement does not constitute a violation of this chapter; [2003, c. 356, §6 (AMD).]

C. [1981, c. 331, §4 (RP).]

C-1. To discriminate, directly or indirectly, against a dealer or to take any action to terminate a dealer's franchise based solely upon the results of a survey of a dealer's customers conducted on behalf of a manufacturer, distributor, distributor branch or division, factory branch or division, wholesale branch or division or officer or agent thereof that is intended or otherwise purports to measure the performance of a dealer, except a sales contest or other recognition program based on reasonable sales and service criteria; [1997, c. 521, §9 (NEW).]

D. To resort to or use any false or misleading advertisement in connection with the business as a manufacturer, distributor, distributor branch or division, factory branch or division, wholesaler branch or division or officer, agent or other representative thereof or to force any dealer or association of dealers formed to advertise the sale of new motor vehicles to participate in any advertising campaign or contest or to purchase any promotional materials, display devices or display decorations or materials at the expense of the new motor vehicle dealer; [1997, c. 521, §10 (AMD).]

E. To offer to sell or to sell any new motor vehicle at a lower actual price therefor than the actual price offered to any other motor vehicle dealer for the same model vehicle similarly equipped or to utilize any device including, but not limited to, sales promotion plans or programs which result in such lesser actual price; provided, however, this paragraph shall not apply to sales to a motor vehicle dealer for resale to any unit of the United States Government; and provided, further, the provisions of this paragraph shall not apply to sales to a motor vehicle dealer of any motor vehicle ultimately sold, donated or used by said dealer in a driver education program; and provided further, that this paragraph shall not apply so long as a manufacturer, distributor, wholesaler or any agent thereof, offers to sell or sells new motor vehicles to all motor vehicle dealers at an equal price. This paragraph shall not apply to sales by a manufacturer, distributor or wholesaler to the United States Government or any agency thereof. [1979, c. 498, §1 (AMD).]

F. To offer to sell or lease or to sell or lease a new motor vehicle to any person except a distributor at a lower actual price than the actual price offered and charged to a motor vehicle dealer for the same model vehicle similarly equipped or to utilize any device that results in a lesser actual price; [1997, c. 521, §11 (AMD).]

F-1. To vary or change the cost or the markup in any fashion or through any device whatsoever to any dealer for any motor vehicle of that line make based on:

- (1) The purchase by any dealer of furniture or other fixtures from any particular source; or
- (2) The purchase by any dealer of computers or other technology from any particular source; [1999, c. 766, §1 (NEW).]

G. To offer to sell or to sell parts or accessories to any new motor vehicle dealer for use in his own business for the purpose of replacing or repairing the same or a comparable part or accessory, at a lower actual price therefor than the actual price charged to any other new motor vehicle dealer for similar parts or accessories for use in his own business; provided, however, in those cases where motor vehicle dealers operate and serve as wholesalers of parts and accessories to retail outlets, nothing contained in this chapter shall be construed to prevent a manufacturer, distributor, wholesaler or any agent thereof from selling to a motor vehicle dealer who operates and services as a wholesaler of parts and accessories, such parts and accessories as may be ordered by such motor vehicle dealer for resale to retail outlets, at a lower price than the actual price charged a motor vehicle dealer who does not operate or serve as a wholesaler of parts and accessories. [1975, c. 573, (NEW).]

H. To prevent or attempt to prevent by contract or otherwise any motor vehicle dealer from changing the capital structure of his dealership or the means by or through which he finances the operation of his dealership, provided the dealer at all times meets any reasonable capital standards agreed to between the dealership and the manufacturer, distributor or wholesaler, and provided such change by the dealer does not result in a change in the executive management control of the dealership. [1975, c. 573, (NEW).]

I. To prevent or attempt to prevent by contract or otherwise a motor vehicle dealer or an officer, partner or stockholder of a motor vehicle dealer from selling or transferring any part of the interest of any of them to any other person or persons or party or parties, except that a dealer, officer, partner or stockholder does not have the right to sell, transfer or assign the franchise or power of management or control under that franchise without the consent of the manufacturer, distributor or wholesaler, which may not be unreasonably withheld.

A franchisor may not exercise a right of first refusal or other right to acquire a motor vehicle franchise from a franchisee as a means to influence the consideration or other terms offered by a person in connection with the acquisition of the franchise or to influence a person to refrain from entering into, or to withdraw from, negotiations for the acquisition of the franchise.

A franchisor may exercise a right of first refusal or other right to acquire a franchise from a franchisee if all of the following requirements are met:

- (1) At the election of the franchisee, the franchisor assumes the lease for or acquires the real property on which the franchise is conducted on the same terms as those on which the real property or lease was to be sold or transferred to the acquiring transferee in connection with the sale of the franchise, unless otherwise agreed to by the franchisee and the franchisor;
- (2) The franchisor assumes all of the obligations of the underlying agreement or proposal that entitles the franchisor to exercise the right of first refusal; and
- (3) The franchisor reimburses the acquiring transferee of the motor vehicle franchise for the reasonable expenses paid or incurred by the transferee in evaluating and investigating the franchise and negotiating and pursuing the acquisition of the franchise prior to the franchisor's exercise of the right of first refusal or other right to acquire the franchise. For purposes of this subsection, expenses to evaluate and investigate the franchise include, in addition to any other expenses associated with the evaluation and investigation of the franchise, legal and accounting expenses and expenses associated with the evaluation and investigation of any real property on which the franchise is conducted, including, but not limited to, expenses associated with title examinations, environmental assessments and other expenses directly related to the acquisition or lease of the real property by the acquiring transferee. Upon reimbursement, any title reports or other reports or studies received by the acquiring transferee as a result of the evaluation or investigation of the franchise or the real

property on which the franchise is conducted must be provided to the franchisor. The acquiring transferee shall submit an itemized list of the expenses to be reimbursed along with supporting documents, if any, to the franchisor no later than 30 days after receipt of a written request for an itemized list of the expenses from the franchisor. The franchisor shall make payment within 30 days after the exercise of the right of first refusal.

For purposes of this paragraph, "acquiring transferee" means the person who made the offer that entitles the franchisor to exercise a right of first refusal.

The right of first refusal does not apply in any right of succession established in section 1174-C unless the franchisor and either the franchisee, if the franchisee is not deceased or incapacitated, or, if the franchisee is deceased or incapacitated, the designated family member or other person authorized to succeed the franchisee pursuant to section 1174-C, subsection 1, paragraphs A to C agree to the exercise of a right of first refusal; [1999, c. 766, §2 (AMD).]

J. To obtain money, goods, services, anything of value, or any other benefit from any other person with whom the motor vehicle dealer does business, on account of or in relation to the transactions between the dealer and said other person, unless such benefit is promptly accounted for and transmitted to the motor vehicle dealer. [1975, c. 573, (NEW).]

K. To compete with a motor vehicle dealer operating under an agreement or franchise from the manufacturer, distributor or wholesaler in the relevant market area, the area to be determined exclusively by equitable principles, except that a manufacturer or distributor is not considered to be competing when operating a dealership either temporarily for a reasonable period, in any case not to exceed one year, or in a bona fide relationship in which an independent person has made a significant investment subject to loss in the dealership and can reasonably expect to acquire full ownership of the dealership on reasonable terms and conditions and except that a distributor is not considered to be competing when a wholly owned subsidiary corporation or the distributor sells motor vehicles at retail if, for at least 3 years prior to January 1, 1975, the subsidiary corporation has been a wholly owned subsidiary of the distributor and engaged in the sale of motor vehicles at retail; [1997, c. 521, §13 (AMD).]

L. To require a motor vehicle dealer to assent to a release assignment, novation, waiver or estoppel which would relieve any person from liability imposed by this chapter; or [1981, c. 470, Pt. A, §23 (AMD).]

M. To require, coerce or attempt to coerce a franchisee to refrain from participation in the management of, investment in or the acquisition of any other line of new motor vehicle or related products as long as the franchisee maintains a reasonable line of credit for each franchise and the franchisee remains in substantial compliance with reasonable facilities requirements of the franchisor. The reasonable facilities requirements may not include any requirement that a franchisee establish or maintain exclusive facilities, personnel or display space; [2003, c. 356, §7 (AMD).]

N. To require any new motor vehicle dealer to change the location of the new motor vehicle dealership or during the course of the agreement to make any substantial alterations to the dealership premises when to do so would be unreasonable; [1981, c. 331, §6 (NEW).]

O. To cancel, terminate, fail to renew or refuse to continue any franchise relationship with a licensed new motor vehicle dealer, notwithstanding the terms, provisions or conditions of any agreement or franchise and notwithstanding the terms or provisions of any waiver, unless a manufacturer has:

- (1) Satisfied the notice requirement of paragraph R;
- (2) Acted in good faith as defined in this chapter; and
- (3) Has good cause for the cancellation, termination, nonrenewal or noncontinuance.

The manufacturer has the burden of proof for showing that it has acted in good faith, that the notice requirements have been complied with and that there was good cause for the franchise termination, cancellation, nonrenewal or noncontinuance; [1997, c. 521, §15 (AMD).]

P. To terminate, fail to renew or refuse to continue any franchise relationship with a licensed new motor vehicle dealer, notwithstanding the terms, provisions or conditions of any agreement or franchise or the terms or provisions of any waiver, unless good cause exists. Good cause may not be shown or based solely on the desire of the manufacturer, distributor, distributor branch or division or officer, agent or other representative thereof for market penetration. Good cause exists for the purposes of a termination, cancellation, nonrenewal or noncontinuance when:

(1) There is a failure by the new motor vehicle dealer to comply with a provision of the franchise, which provision is both reasonable and of material significance to the franchise relationship, as long as compliance on the part of the new motor vehicle dealer is reasonably possible and the manufacturer first acquired actual or constructive knowledge of the failure not more than 180 days prior to the date on which notification is given pursuant to paragraph R.

When the failure by the new motor vehicle dealer relates to the performance of the new motor vehicle dealer in sales or service, the failure of the new motor vehicle dealer to effectively carry out the performance provisions of the franchise is good cause if:

(a) The new motor vehicle dealer was apprised by the manufacturer in writing of that failure; the notification stated that notice was provided of failure of performance pursuant to this section; and the new motor vehicle dealer was afforded a reasonable opportunity for a period of not less than 6 months to exert good faith efforts to carry out the performance provisions;

(b) The failure thereafter continued within the period that began not more than 180 days before the date notification of termination, cancellation or nonrenewal was given pursuant to paragraph R; and

(c) The new motor vehicle dealer has not substantially complied with reasonable performance criteria established by the manufacturer and communicated to the dealer;

(3) The dealer and the manufacturer or distributor agree not to renew the franchise; or

(4) The manufacturer discontinues production or distribution of the franchise product; [ 1997 , c. 521 , §16 (AMD) . ]

Q. To cancel, terminate, fail to renew or refuse to continue any franchise relationship with a licensed new motor vehicle dealer, notwithstanding the terms, provisions or conditions of any agreement or franchise or notwithstanding the terms or provisions of any waiver, based on any of the following items, which do not constitute good cause:

(1) The change of ownership of the new motor vehicle dealer's dealership. This subparagraph does not authorize any change in ownership that would have the effect of the sale of the franchise without the manufacturer's or distributor's written consent. This consent may not be unreasonably withheld. The burden of establishing the reasonableness is on the manufacturer or distributor;

(2) The fact that the new motor vehicle dealer unreasonably refused to purchase or accept delivery of any new motor vehicle parts, accessories or any other commodity or services not ordered by the new motor vehicle dealer, except that the manufacturer may require that the dealer stock a reasonable supply of parts or accessories as required to perform campaign, recall or warranty work and except that this provision is not intended to modify or supersede any requirement of the franchise that dealers market a representative line of those motor vehicles that the manufacturer is publicly advertising;

(3) The fact that the new motor vehicle dealer owns, has an investment in, participates in the management of or holds a license for the sale of another make or line of new motor vehicle or that the new motor vehicle dealer has established another make or line of new motor vehicle in the same dealership facilities as those of the manufacturer, provided that the new motor vehicle dealer maintains a reasonable line of credit for each make or line of new motor vehicle and that the new motor vehicle dealer remains in substantial compliance with reasonable facilities' requirements of the manufacturer;

(4) The fact that the new motor vehicle dealer sells or transfers ownership of the dealership or sells or transfers capital stock in the dealership to the new motor vehicle dealer's spouse, son or daughter and the manufacturer shall give effect to that change in the ownership in the franchise unless the transfer of the new motor vehicle dealer's license is denied or the new owner is unable to license. This paragraph does not authorize any changes in ownership that have the effect of the sale of the franchise without the manufacturer's or distributor's written consent. This consent may not be unreasonably withheld. The burden of establishing the reasonableness is on the manufacturer or distributor; or

(4-A) The fact that there is a survey or surveys of a dealer's customers conducted by or on behalf of the manufacturer, distributor, distributor branch or distributor representative, factory branch or factory representative that is intended or otherwise purports to measure the performance of a dealer; [1997, c. 521, §17 (AMD).]

R. To cancel, terminate, fail to renew or refuse to continue any franchise relationship with a licensed new motor vehicle dealer, notwithstanding the terms, provisions or conditions of any agreement or franchise or the terms or provisions of any waiver, without first furnishing notification of the termination to the new motor vehicle dealer as follows:

(1) Notification under this paragraph shall be in writing, shall be by certified mail or personally delivered to the new motor vehicle dealer and shall contain:

(a) A statement of intention to terminate the franchise, cancel the franchise or not to renew the franchise;

(b) A statement of the reasons for the termination, cancellation or nonrenewal; and

(c) The date on which the termination, cancellation or nonrenewal takes effect;

(2) The notice described in this paragraph shall not be less than 90 days prior to the effective date of the termination, cancellation or nonrenewal; or

(3) The notice described in this paragraph shall not be less than 15 days prior to the effective date of the termination, cancellation or nonrenewal with respect to any of the following:

(a) Insolvency of the new motor vehicle dealer, or filing of any petition by or against the new motor vehicle dealer under any bankruptcy or receivership law; [1995, c. 65, Pt. A, §15 (AMD); 1995, c. 65, Pt. A, §153 (AFF); 1995, c. 65, Pt. C, §15 (AFF).]

(b) The business operations of the franchised motor vehicle dealer have been abandoned or closed for 7 consecutive business days unless the closing is due to an act of God, strike or labor difficulty;

(c) Conviction of or plea of nolo contendere of a franchised motor vehicle dealer, or one of its principal owners, of any Class A, B or C crime, as defined in the Maine Criminal Code, Title 17-A, in which a sentence of imprisonment of one year or more is imposed under Title 17-A, sections 1251 and 1252; or

(d) Revocation of the franchised motor vehicle dealer's license pursuant to Title 29-A, section 903; [1995, c. 65, Pt. A, §15 (AMD); 1995, c. 65, Pt. A, §153 (AFF); 1995, c. 65, Pt. C, §15 (AFF).]

S. To cancel, terminate, fail to renew or refuse to continue any franchise relationship with a licensed new motor vehicle dealer without providing fair and reasonable compensation to the licensed new motor vehicle dealer for:

(1) All unsold new model motor vehicle inventory of the current and previous model year purchased from the manufacturer;

(2) Supplies and parts purchased from the manufacturer or its approved sources;

(3) Equipment and furnishings purchased from the manufacturer or its approved sources; and

(4) Special tools purchased from the manufacturer or its approved sources.

If the involuntary termination, cancellation or nonrenewal is due to a failure of performance of the new motor vehicle dealer in sales or service and the new motor vehicle dealer is leasing the dealership facilities from a lessor other than the manufacturer, the manufacturer shall pay the new motor vehicle dealer a sum equivalent to the rent for the unexpired term of the lease or one year's rent, whichever is less, or, if the new motor vehicle dealer owns the facilities, the manufacturer shall pay the new motor vehicle dealer a sum equivalent to the reasonable rental value of the facilities for one year, prorated for each line make at the facility based on total sales volume of each line make at the facility for the calendar year prior to the involuntary termination, cancellation or nonrenewal.

The fair and reasonable compensation for the items listed in subparagraphs (1) to (4) may in no instance be less than the acquisition price and must be paid by the manufacturer when possible within 90 days of the effective date of the termination, cancellation or nonrenewal, provided that the new motor vehicle dealer has clear title to the inventory and other items and is in a position to convey that title to the manufacturer.

In lieu of any injunctive relief or any other damages, if the manufacturer fails to prove there was good cause for the termination, cancellation or nonrenewal, or if the manufacturer fails to prove that it acted in good faith, then the manufacturer may pay the new motor vehicle dealer fair and reasonable compensation for the value of the dealership as an ongoing business; or [1997, c. 521, §18 (AMD).]

T. To act as, offer to act as or purport to be a broker; [1997, c. 521, §19 (NEW).]

[ 2003, c. 356, §§6, 7 (AMD) .]

**4. Dealer violations.** Motor vehicle dealer:

A. To require a purchaser of a new motor vehicle, as a condition of sale and delivery thereof, to also purchase special features, appliances, equipment, parts or accessories not desired or requested by the purchaser; provided, however, that this prohibition does not apply as to special features, appliances, equipment, parts or accessories that are already installed on the car when received by the dealer; provided further, that the motor vehicle dealer prior to the consummation of the purchase reveals to the purchaser the substance of this paragraph; [1995, c. 269, §1 (AMD).]

B. To represent and sell as a new motor vehicle, without disclosure, any motor vehicle that has been used and operated for demonstration purposes or is otherwise a used motor vehicle; [1997, c. 521, §20 (AMD).]

C. To resort to or use any false or misleading advertisement in connection with business as a motor vehicle dealer; [1997, c. 521, §20 (AMD).]

D. To fail to disclose conspicuously in writing the motor vehicle dealer's policy in relation to the return of deposits received from any person. A dealer shall require that a person making a deposit sign the form on which the disclosure appears; or [1997, c. 521, §21 (AMD).]

E. To fail to disclose in writing to a purchaser of a new motor vehicle before entering into a sales contract that the new motor vehicle has been damaged and repaired if the dealer has knowledge of the damage or repair and if the damage calculated at the retail cost of repair to the new motor vehicle exceeds 5% of the manufacturer's suggested retail price, except that a new motor vehicle dealer is not required to disclose to a purchaser that any glass, bumpers, audio system, instrument panel, communication system or tires were damaged at any time if the glass, bumpers, audio system, instrument panel, communication system or tires have been replaced with original or comparable equipment. [2003, c. 356, §8 (AMD).]

[ 2003, c. 356, §8 (AMD) .]

SECTION HISTORY

1975, c. 573, (NEW). 1979, c. 498, §1 (AMD). 1981, c. 331, §§4-6 (AMD). 1981, c. 470, §§A23-A25 (AMD). 1995, c. 65, §A15 (AMD). 1995, c. 269, §1 (AMD). 1995, c. 65, §§A153,C15 (AFF). 1997, c. 521, §§8-22 (AMD). 1999, c. 766, §§1,2 (AMD). 2003, c. 356, §§6-8 (AMD).

## 10 §1174-A. Limitations on establishing or relocating dealerships

No new motor vehicle dealership may be established and no existing motor vehicle dealership may be relocated, except as follows. [1981, c. 331, §7 (NEW).]

**1. Notification.** In the event that a manufacturer seeks to enter into a franchise establishing an additional new motor vehicle dealership or relocating an existing new motor vehicle dealership, within or into a relevant market area where the same line make is then represented, the manufacturer shall, in writing, first notify each new motor vehicle dealer in the line make in the relevant market area of the intention to establish an additional dealership or to relocate an existing dealership within or into that market area. The relevant market area shall be a radius of 5 miles around an existing dealership in the following cities: Augusta; Auburn; Bangor; Biddeford; Brewer; Falmouth; Lewiston; Portland; Saco; South Portland; Waterville; and Westbrook. The relevant market area shall be a radius of 10 miles around all other existing dealerships.

Within 30 days of receiving the notice or within 30 days after the end of any appeal procedure provided by the manufacturer, any such new motor vehicle dealership may file a complaint in the Superior Court of the county in which the dealership is located, protesting the establishing or relocating of the new motor vehicle dealership. When such a complaint is filed, the manufacturer may not establish or relocate the proposed new motor vehicle dealership until a hearing has been held on the merits, nor thereafter, if the court has determined that there is good cause for not permitting the new motor vehicle dealership. For the purposes of this section, the reopening in a relevant market area of a new motor vehicle dealership that has not been in operation for one year or more is deemed the establishment of an additional new motor vehicle dealership.

[ 1981, c. 331, §7 (NEW) .]

**2. Good cause.** In determining whether good cause has been established for not entering into or relocating an additional franchise for the same line make, the court shall take into consideration the existing circumstances, including, but not limited to:

A. Permanency of the investment of both the existing and proposed new motor vehicle dealers; [1981, c. 331, §7 (NEW).]

B. Effect on the retail new motor vehicle business and the consuming public in the relevant market area; [1981, c. 331, §7 (NEW).]

C. Whether it is injurious or beneficial to the public welfare for an additional new motor vehicle dealer to be established; [1981, c. 331, §7 (NEW).]

D. Whether the new motor vehicle dealers of the same line make in that relevant market area are providing adequate competition and convenient consumer care for the motor vehicles of the line make in the market area which includes the adequacy of motor vehicle sales and service facilities, equipment, supply of motor vehicle parts and qualified service personnel; [1981, c. 331, §7 (NEW).]

E. Whether the establishment of an additional new motor vehicle dealership would increase competition and therefore be in the public interest; and [1981, c. 331, §7 (NEW).]

F. The effect on the relocating dealer as a result of not being permitted to relocate. [1981, c. 331, §7 (NEW).]

[ 1981, c. 331, §7 (NEW) .]

### SECTION HISTORY

1981, c. 331, §7 (NEW).

## 10 §1174-B. Transportation damages

**1. Liability of a new dealer after acceptance.** Notwithstanding the terms, provisions or conditions of any agreement or franchise, the new motor vehicle dealer is solely liable for damages to new motor vehicles after acceptance from the carrier and before delivery to the ultimate purchaser.

[ 1981, c. 331, §7 (NEW) . ]

**2. Liability of manufacturer.** Notwithstanding the terms, provisions or conditions of any agreement or franchise, the manufacturer is liable for all damages to motor vehicles before delivery to a carrier or transporter.

[ 1981, c. 331, §7 (NEW) . ]

**3. Additional liability of dealer.** The new motor vehicle dealer is liable for damages to new motor vehicles after delivery to the carrier only if the dealer selects the method of transportation, mode of transportation and the carrier. In all other instances, the manufacturer is liable for carrier-related new motor vehicle damage, except that the new motor vehicle dealer must annotate the bill of lading or other carrier document indicating damages observed at the time of delivery to the motor vehicle dealer, and that the dealer shall promptly notify the manufacturer of any concealed damage discovered after delivery.

[ 1981, c. 331, §7 (NEW) . ]

### SECTION HISTORY

1981, c. 331, §7 (NEW) .

## 10 §1174-C. Survivorship

**1. Right of family member.** The right of a designated family member to succeed in dealer ownership is governed by the following provisions.

A. A designated family member of a deceased, incapacitated or retiring new motor vehicle dealer, which family member has been designated under the will of the dealer or in writing to the manufacturer, distributor, factory branch, factory representative or importer, may succeed the dealer in the ownership or operation of the dealership under the existing franchise or distribution agreement if the designated family member gives the manufacturer, distributor, factory branch, factory representative or importer of new motor vehicles written notice of the intention to succeed to the dealership within 120 days of the dealer's death, incapacity or retirement and unless there exists good cause for refusal to honor the succession on the part of the manufacturer, factory branch, factory representative, distributor or importer. [2003, c. 356, §9 (AMD) . ]

B. The manufacturer, distributor, factory branch, factory representative or importer may request and the designated family member shall provide, upon the request, on forms provided for that purpose, personal and financial data that is reasonably necessary to determine whether the succession shall be honored. [1981, c. 331, §7 (NEW) . ]

C. In addition to a designated family member, a person who has been a general manager or other employee with significant and varied managerial experience for a dealer for at least 5 years may be designated by that dealer to succeed in dealer ownership, and the designee has the same rights and status as a designated family member. [1997, c. 521, §24 (NEW) . ]

[ 2003, c. 356, §9 (AMD) . ]

**2. Refusal to honor; notice required.** The refusal to honor the succession to ownership is governed by the following provisions.

A. If a manufacturer, distributor, factory branch, factory representative or importer believes that good cause exists for refusing to honor the succession to the ownership and operation of a dealership by a family member of a deceased or incapacitated new motor vehicle dealer under the existing franchise agreement, the manufacturer, distributor, factory branch, factory representative or importer may, within 60 days of receipt of the information requested in subsection 1, paragraph B, serve upon the designated family member notice of its refusal to honor the succession or its intent to discontinue the existing franchise agreement with the dealership no sooner than 90 days from the date the notice is served.

[1981, c. 331, §7 (NEW).]

B. The notice shall state the specific grounds for the refusal to honor the succession and of its intent to discontinue the existing franchise agreement with the dealership no sooner than 90 days from the date the notice is served. [1981, c. 331, §7 (NEW).]

C. If notice of refusal and discontinuance is not timely served upon the family member, the franchise agreement shall continue in effect subject to termination only as otherwise permitted by this section.

[1981, c. 331, §7 (NEW).]

[ 1981, c. 331, §7 (NEW) .]

**3. Written designation of succession unaffected.** This section does not preclude a new motor vehicle dealer from designating any person as his successor by written instrument filed with the manufacturer, distributor, factory branch, factory representative or importer.

[ 1981, c. 331, §7 (NEW) .]

#### SECTION HISTORY

1981, c. 331, §7 (NEW). 1997, c. 521, §§23,24 (AMD). 1997, c. 521, §24 (AMD). 2003, c. 356, §9 (AMD).

## **10 §1175. Delivery and preparation obligations; product liability and implied warranty complaints**

Every manufacturer shall specify to the dealer the delivery and preparation obligations of its motor vehicle dealers prior to delivery of new motor vehicles to retail buyers. The delivery and preparation obligations of its motor vehicle dealers and a schedule of the compensation to be paid to its motor vehicle dealers for the work and services they shall be required to perform in connection with such delivery and preparation obligations shall constitute any such dealer's only responsibility for product liability as between such dealer and such manufacturer. The compensation as set forth on said schedule shall be reasonable.

[1975, c. 573, (NEW).]

In any action or claim brought against the dealer on a product liability complaint in which it is later determined that the manufacturer is liable, the dealer shall be entitled, from the manufacturer, to receive its reasonable costs and attorney's fees incurred in defending the claim or action. [1979, c. 498, §2 (NEW).]

In any action or claim brought against the dealer on a breach of implied warranty complaint in which it is later determined that the manufacturer is liable, the dealer shall be entitled, from the manufacturer, to receive its reasonable costs and attorney's fees incurred in defending the claim or action. In any such implied warranty action, a dealer shall have the rights of a buyer under Title 11, section 2-607, subsection (5). [1985, c. 221, (NEW).]

The court shall consider the dealer's share in the responsibility for the damages in awarding costs and attorney's fees. [1979, c. 498, §2 (NEW).]

#### SECTION HISTORY

1975, c. 573, (NEW). 1979, c. 498, §2 (AMD). 1985, c. 221, (AMD).

## 10 §1176. Warranty

If a motor vehicle franchisor requires or permits a motor vehicle franchisee to perform labor or provide parts in satisfaction of a warranty created by the franchisor, the franchisor shall properly and promptly fulfill its warranty obligations, in the case of motor vehicles over 10,000 pounds gross vehicle weight rating, shall adequately and fairly compensate the franchisee for any parts so provided and, in the case of all other motor vehicles, shall reimburse the franchisee for any parts so provided at the retail rate customarily charged by that franchisee for the same parts when not provided in satisfaction of a warranty. A franchisor may not otherwise recover its costs for reimbursing a franchisee for parts and labor pursuant to this section. For purposes of this section, the retail rate customarily charged by the franchisee for parts may be established by submitting to the franchisor 100 sequential nonwarranty customer-paid service repair orders or 60 days of nonwarranty customer-paid service repair orders, whichever is less in terms of total cost, covering repairs made no more than 180 days before the submission and declaring the average percentage markup. The average percentage markup so declared is the retail rate, which goes into effect 30 days following the declaration, subject to audit of the submitted repair orders by the franchisor and adjustment of the average percentage markup based on that audit. Only retail sales not involving warranty repairs, not involving state inspection, not involving routine maintenance such as changing the oil and oil filter and not involving accessories may be considered in calculating the average percentage markup. A franchisor may not require a franchisee to establish the average percentage markup by an unduly burdensome or time-consuming method or by requiring information that is unduly burdensome or time-consuming to provide, including, but not limited to, part-by-part or transaction-by-transaction calculations. A franchisee may not change the average percentage markup more than 2 times in one calendar year. Further, the franchisor shall reimburse the franchisee for any labor so performed at the retail rate customarily charged by that franchisee for the same labor when not performed in satisfaction of a warranty; as long as the franchisee's rate for labor not performed in satisfaction of a warranty is routinely posted in a place conspicuous to its service customer. A franchisor is not required to pay the price charged by the dealer to retail customers for parts of systems, appliances, furnishings, accessories and fixtures of a motor home as defined in Title 29-A, section 101, subsection 40 that are designed, used and maintained primarily for nonvehicular residential purposes. Any claim made by a franchisee for compensation for parts provided or for reimbursement for labor performed in satisfaction of a warranty must be paid within 60 days of its approval. All the claims must be either approved or disapproved within 60 days of their receipt. A claim may be submitted within 90 days after the performance of services. When a claim is disapproved, the franchisee that submitted the claim must be notified in writing of the claim's disapproval within that period, together with the specific reasons for its disapproval. A franchisor may not, by agreement, by restriction upon reimbursement, or otherwise, restrict the nature or extent of labor performed or parts provided so that such restriction impairs the franchisee's ability to satisfy a warranty created by the franchisor by performing labor in a professional manner or by providing parts required in accordance with generally accepted standards. [2003, c. 356, §10 (AMD).]

In any claim that is disapproved by the manufacturer, and the dealer brings legal action to collect the disapproved claim and is successful in the action, the court shall award the dealer the cost of the action together with reasonable attorney fees. Reasonable attorney fees shall be determined by the value of the time reasonably expended by the attorney and not by the amount of the recovery on behalf of the dealer. [1979, c. 498, §3 (NEW).]

It is unlawful for a franchisor, manufacturer, factory branch, distributor branch or subsidiary to own, operate or control, either directly or indirectly, a motor vehicle warranty or service facility located in the State except on an emergency or interim basis or if no qualified applicant has applied for appointment as a dealer in a market previously served by a new motor vehicle dealer of that manufacturer, factory branch, distributor branch or subsidiary's line make. [1997, c. 521, §25 (NEW).]

### SECTION HISTORY

1975, c. 573, (NEW). 1979, c. 498, §3 (AMD). 1979, c. 698, §1 (AMD).  
1991, c. 328, (AMD). 1995, c. 65, §A16 (AMD). 1995, c. 65, §§A153,C15  
(AFF). 1997, c. 521, §25 (AMD). 2003, c. 356, §10 (AMD).

## 10 §1176-A. Audits

A manufacturer may reasonably and periodically audit a new motor vehicle dealer to determine the validity of paid claims or any charge-backs for customer or dealer incentives. Audits of incentive payments may be only for the 18-month period immediately preceding the date notifying the dealer that an audit is to be conducted. [1997, c. 521, §26 (NEW).]

### SECTION HISTORY

1997, c. 521, §26 (NEW).

## 10 §1177. Unreasonable restrictions

It shall be unlawful directly or indirectly to impose unreasonable restrictions on the motor vehicle dealer or franchisee relative to transfer, sale, right to renew, termination, discipline, noncompetition covenants, site-contract whether by sublease, collateral pledge of lease, or otherwise, right of first refusal to purchase, option to purchase, compliance with subjective standards and assertion of legal or equitable rights. [1975, c. 573, (NEW).]

### SECTION HISTORY

1975, c. 573, (NEW).

## 10 §1178. Covered under written or oral agreements

**1. Agreements subject to this chapter.** Written or oral agreements between a manufacturer, wholesaler or distributor with a motor vehicle dealer including, but not limited to, the franchise offering, the franchise agreement, sales agreements, policies and procedures agreements, bulletins or manuals, sales of goods, services or advertising, leases or mortgages of real or personal property, promises to pay, security interests, pledges, insurance contracts, advertising contracts, construction or installation contracts, servicing contracts, and all other such agreements in which the manufacturer, wholesaler or distributor has any direct or indirect interest, are subject to this chapter.

[ 2003, c. 356, §11 (AMD) .]

**2. Copy of agreement or amendments.** Before any new selling agreement or any amendment thereto between said parties shall become effective, the manufacturer, distributor, wholesaler, distributor branch or division, factory branch or division, wholesale branch or division, or officer, agent or other representative thereof shall, 90 days prior to the effective date thereof, forward a copy of such agreement or amendment to the dealer.

[ 1975, c. 573, (NEW) .]

### SECTION HISTORY

1975, c. 573, (NEW). 2003, c. 356, §11 (AMD).

## 10 §1179. Franchise interest, vested rights

Notwithstanding any other provision of law, it shall be unlawful for the manufacturer, wholesaler, distributor or franchisor without due cause, to fail to renew a franchise on terms then equally available to all its motor vehicle dealers, to terminate a franchise or to restrict the transfer of a franchise unless the franchisee shall receive fair and reasonable compensation for the value of the business. [1975, c. 573, (NEW) .]

### SECTION HISTORY

1975, c. 573, (NEW).

## **10 §1180. Franchisee's right to associate**

Any franchisee shall have the right of free association with other franchisees for any lawful purpose. [1975, c. 573, (NEW).]

SECTION HISTORY  
1975, c. 573, (NEW).

## **10 §1181. Discounts and other inducements**

In connection with a sale of a motor vehicle or vehicles to the State or to any political subdivision of the State, a manufacturer, distributor, wholesaler or corporate affiliate may not offer any discounts, refunds or any other similar type of inducement to any dealer without making the same offer or offers to all other of its dealers within the relevant market area, and if such inducements are made, the manufacturer, distributor or wholesaler shall give simultaneous notice of the inducements to all of its dealers within the relevant market area. [1999, c. 766, §3 (AMD).]

SECTION HISTORY  
1975, c. 573, (NEW). 1999, c. 766, §3 (AMD).

## **10 §1182. Public policy**

Any contract or part thereof or practice thereunder in violation of any provision of this chapter shall be deemed against public policy and shall be void and unenforceable. [1975, c. 573, (NEW).]

The Legislature finds that the manufacture, distribution and sale of motor vehicles in the State vitally affects the general economy of the State and the public interest and public welfare; that the manufacturers of motor vehicles whose physical manufacturing facilities are not located within the State and distributors are doing business in the State through their control over and relationship and transactions with their dealers in the State; that the geographical location of the State makes it necessary to ensure the availability of motor vehicles and parts and dependable service for motor vehicles throughout the State to protect and preserve the transportation system, the public safety and welfare and the investments of its residents. The Legislature declares, on the basis of these findings, that it is necessary to regulate and to license motor vehicle manufacturers and distributors and their branches and representatives, motor vehicle dealers and any other person engaged in the business of selling or purchasing vehicles in the State in order to prevent frauds, impositions and other abuses against residents and to protect and preserve the economy, the investments of residents, the public safety and the transportation system of the State. [1997, c. 521, §27 (NEW).]

SECTION HISTORY  
1975, c. 573, (NEW). 1997, c. 521, §27 (AMD).

## **10 §1182-A. Exemption for installation on previously assembled truck chassis**

This chapter does not apply to a person, partnership, firm, association, corporation or trust, resident or nonresident, that manufactures, assembles, distributes, sells, leases, solicits or advertises the sale or lease of a motor vehicle that consists of the installation on a previously assembled truck chassis in excess of 25,000 pounds gross vehicle weight rating, as defined by Title 29-A, section 101, subsection 26-B, special bodies or equipment that, when installed, form an integral part of the motor vehicle and constitute a major manufacturing alteration. This exemption applies only to entities that do not franchise in the State. [2003, c. 166, §1 (AMD).]

SECTION HISTORY  
1997, c. 521, §28 (NEW). 2003, c. 166, §1 (AMD).

### **10 §1183. Statute of limitation**

Actions arising out of any provision of this chapter shall be commenced within 4 years next after the cause of action accrues; provided, however, that if a person liable hereunder conceals the cause of action from the knowledge of the person entitled to bring it, the period prior to the discovery of his cause of action by the person so entitled shall be excluded in determining the time limited for commencement of the action. If a cause of action accrues during the pendency of any civil, criminal or administrative proceeding against a person brought by the United States, or any of its agencies under the antitrust laws, the Federal Trade Commission Act, or any other Federal Act, or the laws of the State related to antitrust laws or to franchising, such actions may be commenced within one year after the final disposition of such civil, criminal or administrative proceeding. [1975, c. 573, (NEW).]

Notwithstanding any provision in a franchise agreement, if a dispute covered by this chapter or any other law is submitted to mediation or arbitration, the time for the dealer to file a complaint, action, petition or protest is tolled until the mediation or arbitration proceeding is completed. [1997, c. 521, §29 (NEW).]

#### SECTION HISTORY

1975, c. 573, (NEW). 1997, c. 521, §29 (AMD).

### **10 §1184. Construction**

In construing this chapter the courts may be guided by the interpretations of the Federal Trade Commission Act(15 U.S.C. 45), as from time to time amended. [1975, c. 573, (NEW).]

If any provision of this chapter is declared unconstitutional or the applicability thereof to any person or circumstance is held invalid, the constitutionality of the remainder of this chapter and the applicability thereof to persons and circumstances shall not be affected thereby. [1981, c. 331, §8 (NEW).]

#### SECTION HISTORY

1975, c. 573, (NEW). 1981, c. 331, §8 (AMD).

### **10 §1185. Jurisdiction**

Any person who shall violate any provisions of this chapter shall be subject to the jurisdiction of the courts of this State, upon service of process in accordance with Title 14, chapter 203, and consistent with the maximum limits of due process as decided by the United States Supreme Court. [1975, c. 573, (NEW).]

#### SECTION HISTORY

1975, c. 573, (NEW).

### **10 §1186. Penalty**

Any person who violates this chapter shall be guilty of a Class E crime. [1979, c. 127, §58 (AMD).]

#### SECTION HISTORY

1975, c. 573, (NEW). 1979, c. 127, §58 (AMD).

Subchapter 2: MAINE MOTOR VEHICLE FRANCHISE  
BOARD HEADING: PL 2003, c. 356, §12 (new)

## 10 §1187. Maine Motor Vehicle Franchise Board; established

The Maine Motor Vehicle Franchise Board, as established in Title 5, section 12004-G, subsection 6-B and referred to in this chapter as "the board," is established for the purpose of enforcing the provisions of this chapter. [2003, c. 356, §12 (NEW).]

**1. Membership.** The board consists of 7 regular members and 4 alternate members:

A. Ten members appointed by the Governor:

- (1) Three regular members and 2 alternate members who are or have been franchised new motor vehicle dealers in the State of Maine;
- (2) A regular member and an alternate member who are or have been employees or representatives of franchisors; and
- (3) Two regular members and one alternate member who are members of the public; and [2005, c. 61, §2 (AMD).]

B. One regular member appointed by the Secretary of State who is not and has not been either a motor vehicle dealer or manufacturer representative and who is an attorney employed by the Secretary of State and assigned to the Bureau of Motor Vehicles. [2005, c. 61, §2 (AMD).]

[2005, c. 61, §2 (AMD) .]

**2. Chair.** The member appointed by the Secretary of State is the chair of the board. The chair shall:

A. Act as the presiding officer in all matters that come before the board; [2003, c. 356, §12 (NEW) .]

B. Make preliminary rulings on discovery and other questions; [2003, c. 356, §12 (NEW) .]

C. Participate fully in board deliberations; and [2003, c. 356, §12 (NEW) .]

D. Vote on the merits of complaints that come before the board only when necessary to break a tie. [2003, c. 356, §12 (NEW) .]

[2003, c. 356, §12 (NEW) .]

**3. Terms.** Regular appointments to the board are for 5-year terms. A member may not serve more than 2 consecutive 5-year terms. The terms of the initial board members must be staggered, with 2 members serving a term of 3 years, 2 members serving a term of 4 years and 2 members serving a term of 5 years. Alternate members are appointed for 5-year terms. The term of the member who serves as chair is without limit.

[2005, c. 61, §3 (AMD) .]

**4. Vacancy.** Any vacancy on the board must be filled by the Governor or the Secretary of State by appointment of a person of the same category as the board member being replaced to hold office for the unexpired term.

[2003, c. 356, §12 (NEW) .]

**5. Compensation.** With the exception of the chair, whose position is funded pursuant to section 1187-A, members of the board are entitled to a per diem of \$100 for each day actually engaged in the performance of their duties and may be reimbursed for reasonable and necessary expenses incurred in carrying out their duties.

[2003, c. 356, §12 (NEW) .]

**6. Rulemaking.** The board shall adopt rules to implement the provisions of this section. Rules adopted pursuant to this subsection are routine technical rules as defined in Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A.

[ 2003, c. 356, §12 (NEW) . ]

**7. Affiliation.** The board is affiliated with the Department of the Secretary of State, Bureau of Motor Vehicles.

[ 2003, c. 356, §12 (NEW) . ]

SECTION HISTORY

2003, c. 356, §12 (NEW). 2005, c. 61, §§2,3 (AMD).

## 10 §1187-A. Fund

To fund the board and to pay the start-up expenses of administration and enforcement of this chapter, there is established the Maine Motor Vehicle Franchise Fund, referred to in this section as "the fund." The board shall impose an initial fee upon each new motor vehicle dealer of \$200 for each dealer's license held by that dealer and an initial fee of \$2,000 for each line make of each manufacturer. The board shall determine on an annual basis whether additional funding is required. If additional funding is required, the board shall meet those funding requirements by adopting rules pursuant to section 1187, subsection 6 to impose additional fees on motor vehicle dealers or manufacturers. In establishing those fees, the board shall ensure that revenues from those fees closely match the costs of the board to administer and enforce this chapter. The board may amend those rules biennially as necessary to ensure that the board has sufficient funds to administer and enforce this chapter. The board shall maintain a fund balance of at least \$20,000. [2003, c. 356, §12 (NEW) . ]

The fund is administered by the Secretary of State. The fund must be used exclusively for the administration and operation of the board for the enforcement of this chapter. Expenses for operation of the board, including the compensation for the chair, must be paid by the board to the Secretary of State on a quarterly basis. [2003, c. 356, §12 (NEW) . ]

SECTION HISTORY

2003, c. 356, §12 (NEW).

## 10 §1188. Duties

The board:

**1. Complaints.** Shall review written complaints filed with the board by persons complaining of conduct governed by this chapter;

[ 2003, c. 356, §12 (NEW) . ]

**2. Decision.** Shall issue written decisions and may issue orders to a franchisee or franchisor in violation of this chapter;

[ 2003, c. 356, §12 (NEW) . ]

**3. Penalty.** May levy a civil penalty pursuant to section 1171-B, subsection 3;

[ 2003, c. 356, §12 (NEW) . ]

**4. Award costs.** Shall award costs and attorney's fees pursuant to section 1173;

[ 2003, c. 356, §12 (NEW) . ]

**5. Interim order.** Shall levy a civil penalty pursuant to section 1171-B, subsection 3 when a party to a complaint under this subchapter is found to have recklessly or knowingly failed, neglected or refused to comply with an interim order issued by the board;

[ 2005, c. 61, §4 (AMD) .]

**6. Procedures.** May appoint persons to be present at the deposition of out-of-state witnesses, administer oaths, issue subpoenas to compel the presence of witnesses or documents and authorize stenographic or recorded transcripts of proceedings; and

[ 2005, c. 61, §4 (AMD) .]

**7. Alternate members.** Alternates are empowered to hear cases and carry out other duties of the board when regular board members from the same category are unable or unwilling to carry out those duties. The chair shall select alternate members to perform duties under this subsection.

[ 2005, c. 61, §5 (NEW) .]

SECTION HISTORY

2003, c. 356, §12 (NEW). 2005, c. 61, §§4,5 (AMD).

## 10 §1188-A. Prehearing conference

Prior to hearing a complaint, but not later than 45 days after the filing of the complaint, the board shall require the parties to attend a prehearing conference with the chair to discuss the possibility of settlement. If the matter is not resolved through the conference, the matter must be placed on the board's calendar for hearing. Settlement conference discussions remain confidential and may not be disclosed or used as an admission in any subsequent hearing. [2003, c. 356, §12 (NEW) .]

SECTION HISTORY

2003, c. 356, §12 (NEW) .

## 10 §1189. Hearings

The board shall hold a hearing on the merits of a complaint within 120 days of the filing of the complaint. The hearing must be conducted pursuant to rules established by the board. A decision must be issued within 30 days of the completion of the hearing. The board shall determine the location of hearings. [2003, c. 356, §12 (NEW) .]

SECTION HISTORY

2003, c. 356, §12 (NEW) .

## 10 §1189-A. Discovery

The parties to a hearing conducted pursuant to this subchapter are permitted to conduct and use the same discovery procedures as provided in the Maine Rules of Civil Procedure, subject to any amendments to the rules as the board might adopt to secure that discovery is expedited. [2003, c. 356, §12 (NEW) .]

Compliance with discovery procedures authorized by this section and by rule may be enforced by application to the board or on the board's own motion. [2003, c. 356, §12 (NEW) .]

SECTION HISTORY

2003, c. 356, §12 (NEW) .

## 10 §1189-B. Appeal

A party appealing an order of the board to the Superior Court shall indicate in the appeal whether it is an appeal on issues of law or on factual matters. [2003, c. 356, §12 (NEW).]

**1. Appeal as matter of law.** An order or decision may be appealed solely on the basis that the board made an error of law. An order or decision appealed may not be set aside or vacated except for an error of law. Additional evidence may not be heard or taken by the Superior Court on an appeal made under this section.

[ 2003, c. 356, §12 (NEW) .]

**2. Appeal involving factual matters.** A party to a decision by the board may appeal to the Superior Court for a hearing on the merits of the dispute. In any such hearing before the Superior Court, all findings of fact of the board are presumed to be correct unless rebutted by clear and convincing evidence.

[ 2003, c. 356, §12 (NEW) .]

A copy of the decision, certified as true and accurate by the chair must be admitted into evidence in any appeal hearing. There is a right to trial by jury in any action brought in Superior Court under this section. An appeal for hearing is subject to the provisions of section 1173. [2003, c. 356, §12 (NEW).]

### SECTION HISTORY

2003, c. 356, §12 (NEW).

## 10 §1190. Statute of limitations

If a complaint is filed with the board by a person otherwise entitled to bring a complaint in the courts of the State, then the applicable statute of limitations is tolled and a civil action in a court of competent jurisdiction is barred pending the outcome of proceedings before the board. [2003, c. 356, §12 (NEW).]

### SECTION HISTORY

2003, c. 356, §12 (NEW).

## 10 §1190-A. Action filed; court

An action, filed in a court of competent jurisdiction, that gives rise or could give rise to a claim or defense under this chapter must be stayed if, within 60 days after the date of filing of the complaint, or service of process, whichever date is later, a party to the action files a complaint with the board asserting the claims or defenses under this chapter. [2003, c. 356, §12 (NEW).]

### SECTION HISTORY

2003, c. 356, §12 (NEW).