

STATEMENT

OF

MR. JOHN FRANCIS III

**FRANCIS AUTOMOTIVE
WEST CHESTER, PENNSYLVANIA**

BEFORE THE

**CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEES
PENNSYLVANIA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA**

JUNE 2, 2011

Good morning Chairmen and members of the Committees. My name is John Francis III. I am here today as a small businessman and also representing my trade association, the Automotive Service Association (ASA). Our independent automotive repair facility, Francis Automotive, is a family-owned and -operated business since 1979. We are located in West Chester, Pennsylvania. Francis Automotive is a General Repair shop servicing vehicles from tire repairs to engine replacements. We have 4 employees and 5 repair bays.

Training is a major part of our business plan. Our staff goes to training regularly including technical training for our technicians, and sales and marketing training for our Service Manager. All of our technicians, including myself, are ASE certified in various areas. I travel to trade shows and national training programs as much as my business will allow.

At Francis Automotive, we use several third-party service information providers – ALLDATA, Identifix and an online service that includes technicians from all over the world, iATN – on a daily basis. As needed, our technicians will use automotive manufacturer websites. We have several aftermarket scan tools that we use and two auto manufacturer scan tools. Tools to perform reflashing are available for all makes of vehicles. It's a business decision regarding which tools to purchase. We have made a business choice not to purchase equipment to reflash BMWs and Mercedes. It is not because the tools and information are not available – they are available. But for our business model, we have chosen not to purchase this equipment.

When we bring a customer's vehicle into the repair bay, then our technicians evaluate issues of concern. If the technician is having problems with the diagnosis or

repair, third-party providers, iATN or automaker websites are all options for our technicians to use for assistance. Third-party providers have been around for many years and most shops I know use them. iATN is an excellent resource with some of the best technicians in the world working together to solve problems. Finally, the more recent automaker websites provide an additional resource for my business.

My Father and I have seen many changes in the automobile. Both federal and state governments continue to encourage clean-engine and clean-fuel technologies. These changes require an immense amount of training for technicians and equipment updates in the repair shop. It's these changes that provide the most challenging issues for our independent shops, not a difficulty in having access to service information. Assuring our schools offer young people an opportunity to pursue a career in automotive repair and providing the most cutting-edge training to these young people is essential to my business and the future of the automotive repair industry.

The Right to Repair issue is not new for our family business. After the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990, ASA had concerns about the availability of service information for post-1996 vehicles. My Father and I traveled to Washington, D.C., to represent ASA as we demonstrated the latest technology used by repairers and the importance of service information availability to members of the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate. In the summer of 2002, the U.S. Senate Commerce Committee encouraged ASA and the automakers to get together and come up with a voluntary, long-term solution for service information availability. We did. ASA and the automakers signed a voluntary agreement that called for automakers to make available service information, tool information and training to independent repairers just as they do

to franchised new car dealers. Any issues or concerns that arise would be addressed by the National Automotive Service Task Force (NASTF). This process is working. Independent repairers see 75% of the 500 million post-warranty service orders in the U.S. each year. Yet NASTF sees less than 100 service information requests or issues per year. The reason for this is simple: service information is available to independent repairers. Francis Automotive is Open for Business. We can repair your car. I would like to invite all the members of the Committees here today to visit our shop and we will be glad to demonstrate to you our service information options. If you want to help our industry, I encourage you to focus on automotive vocational programs in our secondary schools and vocational schools. These programs will determine the future of our industry.

Thank you.