

Senate Fiscal Agency
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SFA**BILL ANALYSIS**

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House Bill 4323 (as reported without amendment)
Sponsor: Representative Terry Geiger
House Committee: Agriculture and Resource Management
Senate Committee: Farming, Agribusiness and Food Systems

Date Completed: 4-26-99

RATIONALE

Under the Michigan Vehicle Code, a vehicle or trailer must be connected to a towing vehicle by suitable safety chains or devices, with one on each side of the coupling and at the extreme outer edge of the vehicle or trailer so that the towed or drawn vehicle or trailer does not deviate more than three inches to either side of the path of the towed vehicle. Each of the two connecting chains or devices must be strong enough to haul the vehicle or trailer when loaded. Federal motor carrier safety regulations, however, permit the use of single-chain devices that meet strength and connection standards established by the American Society of Agricultural Engineers. Consequently, farm equipment manufacturers have been producing farm implements that meet the higher standards for single-chain coupling devices in compliance with Federal motor carrier safety regulations. Because the new coupling devices involve only a single chain, they are in violation of Michigan law. It has been suggested that the Vehicle Code should conform to Federal regulations in regard to safety coupling devices for towing farm equipment.

Although the single-chain devices that farm equipment manufacturers have developed for towing a vehicle meet Federal motor carrier safety regulations and, consequently, are safer than older double-chain devices, the newer devices violate Michigan statutory requirements because they involve only a single chain instead of the double chains, as required under State law. Thus, a farmer pulling a newer model grain hulling tractor that is connected to a pickup truck by a single-chain hookup violates State law. The bill would bring into compliance with Federal regulations Michigan law on the use of safety chains when towing a vehicle or trailer, thereby legalizing the use of single chains in the State.

Legislative Analyst: L. Arasim

FISCAL IMPACT

The bill would have no fiscal impact on State or local government.

Fiscal Analyst: P. Alderfer

CONTENT

The bill would amend the Michigan Vehicle Code's provisions on the towing of a vehicle or trailer by another vehicle to provide that in the case of an implement of husbandry, with a gross vehicle weight rating or gross combination weight rating of up to 10,000 pounds, the safety chains or devices required under the Code would have to conform to Federal motor carrier safety regulations.

MCL 257.721

ARGUMENTS

(Please note: The arguments contained in this analysis originate from sources outside the Senate Fiscal Agency. The Senate Fiscal Agency neither supports nor opposes legislation.)

Supporting Argument

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This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan Senate staff for use by the Senate in its deliberations and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.