

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2017

SESSION LAW 2017-148
SENATE BILL 413

AN ACT TO CLARIFY MOTOR VEHICLE DEALERS AND MANUFACTURERS
LICENSING LAWS.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

SECTION 1. G.S. 20-288(a1)(2) reads as rewritten:

"(2) Proof that the applicant, within the last 12 months, has completed a 12-hour licensing course approved by the Division if the applicant is seeking an initial license and a six-hour course approved by the Division if the applicant is seeking a renewal license. The requirements of this subdivision do not apply to a used motor vehicle dealer the primary business of which is the sale of salvage vehicles on behalf of insurers or to a manufactured home dealer licensed under G.S. 143-143.11 who complies with the continuing education requirements of G.S. 143-143.11B. The requirement of this subdivision does not apply to persons age 62 or older as of July 1, 2002, who are seeking a renewal license. This subdivision also does not apply to an applicant who holds a license as a new motor vehicle dealer as defined in G.S. 20-286(13) and operates from an established showroom ~~20 miles or less from~~ located in an area within a radius of 30 miles around the location of the established showroom for which the applicant seeks a used motor vehicle dealer license. An applicant who also holds a license as a new motor vehicle dealer may designate a representative to complete the licensing course required by this subdivision."

SECTION 2. G.S. 20-305(30) reads as rewritten:

"(30) To vary the price charged to any of its franchised new motor vehicle dealers located in this State for new motor vehicles based on the dealer's purchase of new facilities, supplies, tools, equipment, or other merchandise from the manufacturer, the dealer's relocation, remodeling, repair, or renovation of existing dealerships or construction of a new facility, the dealer's participation in training programs sponsored, endorsed, or recommended by the manufacturer, whether or not the dealer is dualed with one or more other line makes of new motor vehicles, or the dealer's sales penetration. Except as provided in this subdivision, it shall be unlawful for any manufacturer, factory branch, distributor, or distributor branch, or any field representative, officer, agent, or any representative whatsoever of any of them to vary the price charged to any of its franchised new motor vehicle dealers located in this State for new motor vehicles based on the dealer's sales volume, the dealer's level of sales or customer service satisfaction, the dealer's purchase of advertising materials, signage, nondiagnostic computer hardware or software, communications devices, or furnishings, or the dealer's participation in used motor vehicle inspection or certification programs sponsored or endorsed by the manufacturer.



The price of the vehicle, for purposes of this subdivision shall include the manufacturer's use of rebates, credits, or other consideration that has the effect of causing a variance in the price of new motor vehicles offered to its franchised dealers located in the State.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, nothing in this subdivision shall be deemed to preclude a manufacturer from establishing sales contests or promotions that provide or award dealers or consumers rebates or incentives; provided, however, that the manufacturer complies with all of the following conditions:

- a. With respect to manufacturer to consumer rebates and incentives, the manufacturer's criteria for determining eligibility shall:
 1. Permit all of the manufacturer's franchised new motor vehicle dealers in this State to offer the rebate or incentive; and
 2. Be uniformly applied and administered to all eligible consumers.
- b. With respect to manufacturer to dealer rebates and incentives, the rebate or incentive program shall:
 1. Be based solely on the dealer's actual or reasonably anticipated sales volume or on a uniform per vehicle sold or leased basis;
 2. Be uniformly available, applied, and administered to all of the manufacturer's franchised new motor vehicle dealers in this State; and
 3. Provide that any of the manufacturer's franchised new motor vehicle dealers in this State may, upon written request, obtain the method or formula used by the manufacturer in establishing the sales volumes for receiving the rebates or incentives and the specific calculations for determining the required sales volumes of the inquiring dealer and any of the manufacturer's other franchised new motor vehicle dealers located within 75 miles of the inquiring dealer.

Nothing contained in this subdivision shall prohibit a manufacturer from providing assistance or encouragement to a franchised dealer to remodel, renovate, recondition, or relocate the dealer's existing facilities, provided that this assistance, encouragement, or rewards are not determined on a per vehicle basis.

It is unlawful for any manufacturer to charge or include the cost of any program or policy prohibited under this subdivision in the price of new motor vehicles that the manufacturer sells to its franchised dealers or purchasers located in this State.

In the event that as of October 1, 1999, a manufacturer was operating a program that varied the price charged to its franchised dealers in this State in a manner that would violate this subdivision, or had in effect a documented policy that had been conveyed to its franchised dealers in this State and that varied the price charged to its franchised dealers in this State in a manner that would violate this subdivision, it shall be lawful for that program or policy, including amendments to that program or policy that are consistent with the purpose and provisions of the existing program or policy, or a program or policy similar thereto implemented after October 1, 1999, to continue in effect as to the manufacturer's franchised dealers located in this State until June 30, ~~2018~~2022.

In the event that as of June 30, 2001, a manufacturer was operating a program that varied the price charged to its franchised dealers in this State in a manner that would violate this subdivision, or had in effect a documented policy that had been conveyed to its franchised dealers in this State and that varied the price charged to its franchised dealers in this State in a manner that would violate this subdivision, and the program or policy was implemented in this State subsequent to October 1, 1999, and prior to June 30, 2001, and provided that the program or policy is in compliance with this subdivision as it existed as of June 30, 2001, it shall be lawful for that program or policy, including amendments to that program or policy that comply with this subdivision as it existed as of June 30, 2001, to continue in effect as to the manufacturer's franchised dealers located in this State until June 30, ~~2018~~2022.

Any manufacturer shall be required to pay or otherwise compensate any franchise dealer who has earned the right to receive payment or other compensation under a program in accordance with the manufacturer's program or policy.

The provisions of this subdivision shall not be applicable to multiple or repeated sales of new motor vehicles made by a new motor vehicle dealer to a single purchaser under a bona fide fleet sales policy of a manufacturer, factory branch, distributor, or distributor branch."

SECTION 3. G.S. 20-305.1(b) reads as rewritten:

"(b) Notwithstanding the terms of any franchise agreement, it is unlawful for any motor vehicle manufacturer, factory branch, distributor, or distributor branch to fail to perform any of its warranty obligations with respect to a motor vehicle, to fail to fully compensate its motor vehicle dealers licensed in this State for warranty parts ~~other than parts used to repair the living facilities of recreational vehicles,~~ other than parts used to repair the living facilities of recreational vehicles, including motor homes, travel trailers, fifth-wheel trailers, camping trailers, and truck campers as defined in G.S. 20-4.01(32b), at the prevailing retail rate according to the factors in subsection (a) of this section, or, in service in accordance with the schedule of compensation provided the dealer pursuant to subsection (a) above, or to otherwise recover all or any portion of its costs for compensating its motor vehicle dealers licensed in this State for warranty parts and service either by reduction in the amount due to the dealer, or by separate charge, surcharge, or other imposition, and to fail to indemnify and hold harmless its franchised dealers licensed in this State against any judgment for damages or settlements agreed to by the manufacturer, including, but not limited to, court costs and reasonable attorneys' fees of the motor vehicle dealer, arising out of complaints, claims or lawsuits including, but not limited to, strict liability, negligence, misrepresentation, express or implied warranty, or rescission or revocation of acceptance of the sale of a motor vehicle as defined in G.S. 25-2-608, to the extent that the judgment or settlement relates to the alleged defective negligent manufacture, assembly or design of new motor vehicles, parts or accessories or other functions by the manufacturer, factory branch, distributor or distributor branch, beyond the control of the dealer. Any audit for warranty parts or service compensation shall only be for the 12-month period immediately following the date of the payment of the claim by the manufacturer, factory branch, distributor, or distributor branch. Any audit for sales incentives, service incentives, rebates, or other forms of incentive compensation shall only be for the 12-month period immediately following the date of the payment of the claim by the manufacturer, factory branch, distributor, or distributor branch pursuant to a sales incentives program, service incentives program, rebate program, or other form of incentive compensation program. Provided, however, these limitations shall not be effective in the case of fraudulent claims."

SECTION 4. G.S. 20-305.5 reads as rewritten:

§ 20-305.5. Sections 20-305, subdivisions (4) through (28), and 20-305.1 to 20-305.4 not applicable to certain manufacturers and dealers. Recreational vehicle manufacturer warranty recall obligations.

(a) The provisions of G.S. 20-305(4) through G.S. 20-305(28) and 20-305.1 to 20-305.4 shall not apply to manufacturers of, or dealers in, mobile or manufactured type housing or recreational trailers. It is unlawful for any manufacturer, factory branch, distributor, or distributor branch that manufactures or distributes recreational vehicles to fail to fully compensate its dealers located in this State in accordance with this section for warranty or recall work performed by the dealers related to the living facilities of the vehicle, including all labor and parts used to repair such living facilities and any equipment, plumbing, appliances, and other options included by the manufacturer, factory branch, distributor, or distributor branch in the purchase price paid by the dealer for the vehicle. For purposes of this section, the term "recreational vehicle" includes motor homes, travel trailers, fifth-wheel trailers, camping trailers, and truck campers as defined by G.S. 20-4.01(32b). With respect to those portions of the living facilities of recreational vehicles and any equipment, plumbing, appliances, and other options that are part of such living facilities and that are included by the recreational vehicle manufacturer, factory branch, distributor, or distributor branch in the purchase price paid by the dealer for the vehicle, the term "warrantor" shall mean any manufacturer or distributor of such living facilities or any equipment, plumbing, appliances, and other options that are part of such living facilities that offers a warranty in writing to either the recreational vehicle dealer or to the ultimate purchaser of the recreational vehicle. The term "warrantor" does not include a person that provides a service contract, mechanical or other insurance, or an extended warranty sold for separate consideration by a dealer or other person not controlled by a warrantor. Notwithstanding the terms or conditions of any contract or agreement, it is unlawful for any recreational vehicle manufacturer, factory branch, distributor, or distributor branch to fail to fully and timely compensate any of its franchised recreational vehicle dealers located in this State in accordance with this section for all parts and labor used by such franchised dealers in making warranty or recall repairs to such living facilities of recreational vehicles, including any equipment, plumbing, appliances, and other options included by the recreational vehicle manufacturer, factory branch, distributor, or distributor branch in the purchase price paid by the dealer for the vehicle, to the extent that the individual components of such living facilities are not separately warranted by the manufacturers or distributors of such components. Notwithstanding the terms or conditions of any warranty, contract, or agreement, it is unlawful for any warrantor, as defined in this subdivision, to fail to fully and timely compensate any franchised recreational vehicle dealer located in this State in accordance with this section for all parts and labor used by such franchised recreational vehicle dealer in making warranty or recall repairs to any component parts of the living facilities of recreational vehicles manufactured or distributed by such warrantor, including any equipment, plumbing, appliances, and other options included by a recreational vehicle manufacturer, factory branch, distributor, or distributor branch in the purchase price paid by the dealer for the vehicle.

(b) Each warrantor as defined in this subdivision and each recreational vehicle manufacturer, factory branch, distributor, and distributor branch that sells or distributes recreational vehicles in this State shall specify in writing to each recreational vehicle dealer licensed in this State who sells products manufactured or distributed by such warrantor or such recreational vehicle manufacturer, factory branch, distributor, or distributor branch, the recreational vehicle dealer's obligations for preparation, delivery, and warranty and recall service on its products, the schedule of compensation to be paid such dealers for parts, work, and service in connection with warranty or recall service, and the time allowances for the performance of such work and service. In no event shall such schedule of compensation fail to include reasonable compensation for diagnostic work and associated administrative

requirements as well as repair service, labor, and transportation provided by the dealer to transport a recreational vehicle to and from a location at which the repairs can be made. Provided, however, that with respect to reimbursement for a recreational vehicle dealer's transportation expenses, the dealer is required to obtain the prior written authorization of the affected warrantor before incurring any transportation expenses, which authorization shall not be unreasonably denied by the warrantor, and provided further that any such request for transportation reimbursement must be denied by the warrantor within 5 business days of the warrantor's receipt of the dealer's request for reimbursement or the request shall be deemed authorized and allowed. Time allowances for the performance of warranty work and service shall be reasonable and adequate for the work to be performed. The compensation which must be paid under this section must be reasonable; provided, however, that under no circumstances may the reasonable compensation under this section be in an amount less than the recreational vehicle dealer's current retail labor rate for nonwarranty work of like kind, provided such amount is competitive with the retail rates charged for parts and labor by other franchised recreational dealers within the dealer's market.

(c) A warrantor may not require a dealer to establish the rate customarily charged by the recreational vehicle dealer for labor 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.

(d) For any part, equipment, plumbing system or device, or appliance or option, a warrantor shall reimburse the dealer the cost of the part, equipment, plumbing system or device, appliance or option, plus a minimum of a thirty percent (30%) handling charge and pay the cost, if any, of freight to return the part, equipment, appliance, or option to the warrantor.

(e) If a warrantor furnishes a part or component to a dealer, at reduced or no cost, to use in performing repairs under a warranty or recall repair, the warrantor shall compensate the dealer for the part or component in the same manner as warranty parts compensation under this section, by compensating the dealer on the basis of a thirty percent (30%) handling charge for the part or component as listed in the warrantor's price schedule less the cost for the part or component.

(f) Notwithstanding the terms of any warranty, contract, or agreement, all claims made by recreational dealers pursuant to this section for compensation for delivery, preparation, warranty and recall work, and transportation costs, including labor, parts, and other expenses, shall be paid by the affected warrantor within 30 days after receipt of claim from the dealer. When any claim is disapproved, the dealer shall be notified in writing of the grounds for disapproval. Any claim not specifically disapproved in writing within 30 days after receipt shall be considered approved and payment is due immediately. No claim which has been approved and paid may be charged back to the dealer unless it can be shown that the claim was false or fraudulent, that the repairs were not properly made or were unnecessary to correct the defective condition, or the dealer failed to reasonably substantiate the claim either in accordance with the manufacturer's reasonable written procedures or by other reasonable means. A warrantor shall not deny a claim or reduce the amount to be reimbursed to the dealer as long as the dealer has provided reasonably sufficient documentation that the dealer (i) made a good-faith attempt to perform the work in compliance with the written policies and procedures of the warrantor and (ii) actually performed the work.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, a warrantor shall not fail to fully compensate a dealer for warranty or recall work or make any chargeback to the dealer's account based on the dealer's failure to comply with the warrantor's claim documentation procedure or procedures unless both of the following requirements have been met:

- (1) The dealer has, within the previous 12 months, failed to comply with the same specific claim documentation procedure or procedures.

(2) The warrantor has, within the previous 12 months, provided a written warning to the dealer by certified United States mail, return receipt requested, identifying the specific claim documentation procedure or procedures violated by the dealer.

(g) Every recreational vehicle manufacturer, factory branch, distributor, or distributor branch that manufactures or distributes recreational vehicles for sale in this State shall designate at least one of its employees knowledgeable in warranty administration who shall be the designated warranty contact person with whom its franchised dealers licensed in this State can communicate to assist them in filing and getting paid on warranty claims related to all component parts of all recreational vehicles such recreational vehicle manufacturer, factory branch, distributor, or distributor branch sells or distributes in this State. Each recreational vehicle manufacturer, factory branch, distributor, or distributor branch shall promptly notify, in writing, all of its franchised recreational vehicle dealers licensed in this State, the Commissioner, and the North Carolina Automobile Dealers Association, Incorporated, of the identity and contact information of the designated warranty contact person and any changes in this information. A recreational vehicle manufacturer or distributor that represents multiple suppliers or multiple line-makes of vehicles shall be permitted to designate a single individual as the designated warranty contact person for all such suppliers and line-makes of vehicles represented by such recreational vehicle manufacturer or distributor.

(h) It shall be unlawful for any warrantor or for any recreational vehicle manufacturer, factory branch, distributor, or distributor branch to recover or attempt to recover all or any portion of its costs for compensating recreational vehicle dealers licensed in this State for warranty or recall parts and service either by reduction in the amount due to the dealer or by separate charge, surcharge, or other imposition.

(i) It shall be unlawful for any recreational vehicle manufacturer, factory branch, distributor, or distributor branch to fail to indemnify and hold harmless its franchised dealers licensed in this State against any judgment for damages or settlements agreed to by the manufacturer, including, but not limited to, court costs and reasonable attorneys' fees of the recreational vehicle dealer, arising out of complaints, claims, or lawsuits, including, but not limited to, strict liability, negligence, misrepresentation, express or implied warranty, or rescission or revocation of acceptance of the sale of a vehicle as defined in G.S. 25-2-608, to the extent that the judgment or settlement relates to the alleged defective or negligent manufacture, assembly, or design of new recreational vehicles, parts, or accessories or other functions by the manufacturer, factory branch, distributor, or distributor branch beyond the control of the dealer. It shall be unlawful for any warrantor to fail to indemnify and hold harmless any recreational vehicle dealer located in this State who sold one or more products warranted by such warrantor against any judgment for damages or settlements agreed to by the warrantor, including, but not limited to, court costs and reasonable attorneys' fees of the recreational vehicle dealer, arising out of complaints, claims, or lawsuits, including, but not limited to, strict liability, negligence, misrepresentation, express or implied warranty, or rescission or revocation of acceptance of the sale of a vehicle or vehicle part, component, or accessory, as defined in G.S. 25-2-608, to the extent that the judgment or settlement relates to the alleged defective or negligent manufacture, assembly, or design of a product warranted by the warrantor or other functions of the warrantor beyond the control of the dealer. Any audit for warranty or recall parts or service compensation shall only be for the 12-month period immediately following the date of the payment of the claim by the manufacturer, factory branch, distributor, distributor branch, or warrantor. Any audit for sales incentives, service incentives, rebates, or other forms of incentive compensation shall only be for the 12-month period immediately following the date of the payment of the claim by the manufacturer, factory branch, distributor, distributor branch, or warrantor. Provided, however, these limitations shall not be effective in the case of fraudulent claims.

(j) It shall be unlawful for any warrantor or for any recreational vehicle manufacturer, factory branch, distributor, or distributor branch to direct or encourage any owner or purchaser of a recreational vehicle to have warranty or recall service work or other repairs on a recreational vehicle made by a repair facility other than either the franchised dealer that sold the vehicle owner the recreational vehicle or the franchised dealer closest in proximity to such recreational vehicle owner or purchaser, provided that the recreational vehicle dealer who sold the vehicle to the owner or purchaser or who is located in closest proximity to such recreational vehicle owner or purchaser has sufficiently trained personnel and the necessary tools and equipment to make the required repairs to the vehicle, has not expressly stated in writing its desire to have the repairs made elsewhere, and is willing to make the repairs within a reasonable period of time after the necessary parts have been supplied to the dealer.

(k) In the event there is a dispute between a recreational vehicle dealer and a warrantor or a recreational vehicle manufacturer, factory branch, distributor, or distributor branch, with relating to any matter referred to in this section, either party may petition the Commissioner in writing, within 30 days after either party has given written notice of the dispute to the other, for a hearing on the subject and the decision of the Commissioner shall be binding on the parties, subject to rights of judicial review and appeal as provided in Chapter 150B of the General Statutes; provided, however, that nothing contained herein shall give the Commissioner any authority as to the content of any warrantor's warranty. Upon the filing of a petition before the Commissioner under this subsection, any chargeback to or any payment required of a recreational vehicle dealer by a warrantor or by a recreational vehicle manufacturer, factory branch, distributor, or distributor branch relating to warranty or recall parts or service compensation, or to sales incentives, service incentives, rebates, other forms of incentive compensation, or the withholding or chargeback of other compensation or support that a dealer would otherwise be eligible to receive, shall be stayed during the pendency of the determination by the Commissioner.

(l) The provisions of G.S. 20-305(4) through G.S. 20-305(28) and G.S. 20-305.2 to G.S. 20-305.4 shall not apply to manufacturers of or dealers in mobile or manufactured type housing or who sell or distribute only nonmotorized recreational trailers; provided, however, that unless specifically exempted, each of these provisions shall be applicable to all recreational vehicle manufacturers, factory branches, distributors, and distributor branches who sell or distribute any motorized recreational vehicles in this State. The provisions of G.S. 20-305.1 shall not apply to manufacturers of or dealers in mobile or manufactured type housing.

(m) To the extent not expressly inconsistent with the provisions of this section, all of the terms and provisions of G.S. 20-305.1 shall be applicable to recreational vehicle dealers and to recreational vehicle manufacturers, factory branches, distributors, and distributor branches under this section. For purposes of this section and Article 12 of Chapter 20 of the General Statutes of North Carolina, the relationship between a recreational vehicle manufacturer or recreational vehicle distributor, on the one part, and a recreational vehicle dealer that is located within this State, on the other part, pursuant to which the recreational vehicle dealer purchases and resells new recreational vehicles from the recreational vehicle manufacturer or recreational vehicle distributor, shall be considered a "franchise", as this term is defined in G.S. 20-286(8a), whether or not the rights and responsibilities of the parties have been delineated in a written agreement or contract."

SECTION 5. Article 3 of Chapter 20 of the General Statutes is amended by adding a new section to read:

§ 20-101.3. Conspicuous disclosure of dealer shop and other service-related fees.

(a) Requirement. – A motor vehicle dealer shall not charge shop fees in conjunction with service work performed by the dealer, or other discretionary fees relating to environmental or regulatory compliance, record retention, or other costs incurred by the dealer in conjunction with service work performed by the dealer, whether or not the fees are attributable to or include

the dealer's internal overhead or profit, unless the dealer complies with both of the following requirements:

- (1) The dealer shall post a conspicuous notice in the service area of the dealership measuring at least 24 inches on each side informing customers that fees regulated by this section may or will be charged and that customers should inquire of dealership personnel if they would like to know the type and amount or basis of the fees charged by the dealer.
- (2) The total amount of all fees regulated by this section shall be disclosed on the customer's repair order or repair invoice. Nothing in this subdivision shall be construed as requiring a dealer to list separately each fee charged by the dealer.

(b) Discretion. – Notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary, a dealer is not required to charge a shop or other service-related fee regulated under this section and may reduce the amount of any or all fees charged.

(c) Notwithstanding any other section of this Chapter, the fees covered by this section shall not be considered a warranty expense and are not subject to the compensation requirements of G.S. 20-305.1."

SECTION 6. If any provision of this act or its application is held invalid, the invalidity does not affect other provisions or applications of this act that can be given effect without the invalid provisions or application, and to this end, the provisions of this act are severable.

SECTION 7. Section 5 of this act becomes effective January 1, 2018, and applies to fees charged on or after that date. The remainder of this act is effective when it becomes law.

In the General Assembly read three times and ratified this the 27th day of June, 2017.

s/ Daniel J. Forest
President of the Senate

s/ Tim Moore
Speaker of the House of Representatives

s/ Roy Cooper
Governor

Approved 4:17 p.m. this 20th day of July, 2017