

The Tribulations of Buying An EV From A Dealership – Lived Experience

This is an email that was sent to the EV Club on March 9, 2022 by a member, Svetlana Wasserman, from Greenwich. It is the text of a letter that she sent to her CT State Representative, reprinted in full with her permission. It speaks for itself.

EV Direct Sales

I just wanted to share with you the letter I sent to my representative, Harry Arora:

Dear Representative Arora,

I'm writing to you with regard to the direct sales of electric vehicles bill, SB214. It is my great chagrin that this bill, which is a commonsense, free market, pro-consumer bill to allow manufacturers of electric vehicles to sell their cars directly to customers, has not yet passed. I have watched year after year as the lobbyists for the traditional dealerships claim that the direct sales bill is anti-consumer.

Please allow me to share my experience of attempting to buy an electric vehicle from a traditional dealer.

When I was shopping for an electric vehicle in 2020, like most auto-shoppers, I wanted to see it and test drive it. I called the Hyundai dealer in Stamford and asked if they had the Kona in stock. They did not. I asked them which dealership had the Kona. They said they could not tell me because each dealership is its own franchise and they did not share a database. They did tell me that if I was ready to place the order right now, they could have one delivered for me. I explained that I was not about to buy a car sight unseen.

Next I called the White Plains Hyundai. They did not have it in stock either. So I called the Fairfield Hyundai, and received the same answer. I begged to speak to a manager, and after explaining what I had been through, he offered to do some research to find which Hyundai dealer had the Kona in

stock and call me back. When he called back he told me that the Hyundai in ALBANY, NY had a Kona in stock, and would I like to make an appointment to see it?

I asked this manager why it is so hard to see and test drive their electric vehicle. He told me it was because very few customers are buying it. Well, I wondered, how are customers going to be buying it when they can't even see it?

Next I tried to test drive the Kia Niro at the dealership in Stamford. This time I was lucky because they had it in stock. When I arrived for my appointment, there was a bit of confusion because no one knew where the car was. Eventually, they found it...at a parking lot in another location. Someone drove over to get it, and after 30 minutes of this kerfuffle, the car showed up. After a very brief overview...because the dealer admitted she did not know much about this car...she turned it over to us to test drive. Except there was one problem. The car was at 7% battery and was sounding all kinds of alarms about being at low battery. Unfortunately, our dealer had no idea where the charge port was, and a second commotion ensued as the staff tried to find someone who knew how to charge the car. Eventually, they found a gentleman who did, and he asked us if we would like to test drive one of their gas models while we wait for the electric Niro to charge up.

Needless to say, we did not buy the Kona or the Niro from the traditional CT dealers. We drove across the border to Mt. Kisco, NY where we were able to test drive a Tesla and have a pleasant experience, and lunch in a NY restaurant to boot.

I don't know why the auto dealers do such a terrible job promoting electric cars. Perhaps they just don't know enough about them. Or perhaps they understand that sales of EVs harm their bottom line on the auto repair side of their business because electric vehicles require virtually no maintenance. I've driven EV's for ten years and never had to do anything more than change the tires.

So if the dealers want to come before you and tell you they oppose this bill because they don't want competition from EV manufacturers, or they don't give a hoot about lowering emissions or meeting our state's greenhouse gas targets, or they don't want to promote job creation from the opening of new EV dealerships, that's fine. Just please don't let them

tell you they are doing it to protect consumers.

I hope that you will do your utmost to help pass SB214 this year.

Kindly,

Svetlana Wasserman

Greenwich