**A** **BILL**

TO AMEND SECTION 56‑3‑2335 OF THE 1976 CODE, RELATING TO RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT LICENSE PLATES, TO PROVIDE THAT RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT LICENSE PLATES MAY ALSO BE ISSUED TO VEHICLES OWNED BY THE RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT BUSINESS AND BY A FLEET OWNER UNDER CONTRACT WITH THE RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT BUSINESS, TO INCREASE THE MAXIMUM NUMBER OF RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT LICENSE PLATES THAT MAY BE ISSUED, AND TO PROVIDE FOR OPERATION OF RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT LICENSED VEHICLES IN OTHER STATES.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina:

SECTION 1. Section 56‑3‑2335 of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

“Section 56‑3‑2335. (A) As used in this section~~,~~:

(1) ‘~~research~~ Research and development business’ or ‘business’ means a person who manufacturers tires in this State for use as original or replacement equipment on ~~new and unused~~ motor vehicles and who conducts research and development activities on tires in conjunction with the person’s manufacturing activities in South Carolina.

(2) ‘Contracted fleet owner’ or ‘contractor’ means a person or company in the business of operating a group of vehicles driven by their employees for the purpose of testing and evaluating the performance of a research and development business’ tires.

(3) ‘Tires’ include tires and tire replacement parts.

(B) Upon application and payment of the required fee, the Department of Motor Vehicles may issue research and development license plates to a research and development business. The license plates must be used exclusively on motor vehicles, including motorcycles, owned by the research and development business, provided to the research and development business by a fleet owner under contract with the research and development business, or provided by a motor vehicle manufacturer to the research and development business for the purpose of testing and evaluating the performance of the research and development business’ tires on the motor vehicle.

(C)(1) Application for research and development license plates must be made by the research and development business on a form prescribed by the department and submitted with proof of the applicant’s status as a bona fide research and development business. The cost of each research and development license plate issued is two hundred dollars, of which one hundred sixty dollars must be remitted by the department to the county in which the testing facility of the business is located. Each plate is valid for two years. A maximum of ~~thirty~~ four hundred research and development license plates may be issued for the two‑year period.

(2) Vehicles with research and development plates, not to exceed one licensed vehicle for each household, may be utilized for personal use if operated by persons authorized by the research and development business.

(3) Vehicles with research and development license plates may be used no more than ten consecutive days in connection with civic events or sporting events.

(D) Vehicles with research and development plates may be operated on the state’s streets and highways or another state’s streets and highways pursuant to a reciprocity agreement with that state. The vehicles may be operated pursuant to this section only for the purpose of testing and evaluating the performance of the research and development business’ tires on the motor vehicle.

(E) The Department of Motor Vehicles may enter into reciprocal agreements with other states concerning the registration and operation of vehicles owned by a research and development business, provided to the research and development business by a fleet owner under contract with the research and development business, or provided by a motor vehicle manufacturer to the research and development business for the purpose of testing and evaluating the performance of the research and development business’ tires.

(F) It is the sole responsibility of the research and development business, or contracted fleet operator, to take any other actions required by another state that are necessary for the research and development business, or contracted fleet operator, to legally test and evaluate the performance of the research and development business’ tires in that state. The research and development business must comply with any other requirements associated with the operation of the vehicle on the other state’s roads and highways.”

SECTION 2. This act takes effect upon approval by the Governor.

‑‑‑‑XX‑‑‑‑