

State of Kansas
House of Representatives

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Representatives, 84th District

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Chairman Rep. Fred Patton
Kansas House Judiciary Committee

Re: **Testimony HB 2434 / Suspended Licenses / Proponent**

Thank you, Chairman Patton and Committee for this opportunity today to provide testimony. I am here to speak in support of HB 2434 which eliminates the authority to suspend driving privileges for the nonpayment of fines from traffic citations or court costs associated with a traffic citation, because I believe driver's license suspensions in Kansas are at an epic level and it is hurting nearly 5% of our citizens that do not pose a threat to public safety.

Nationwide, Kansas is ranked number five for the most suspended driver's licenses according to Insurify, a car insurance quote website. As of October 22, 2019, there were 139,661 licenses suspended for unpaid tickets and 30,004 restricted driver's licenses according to the Kansas Department of Revenue Division of Vehicles. The percent of drivers with suspended/revoked license is 4.94%, out of 2,2028,657 licensed drivers. This is shockingly outrageous.

Although driver's license suspensions can keep unsafe drivers off the road, it is a major barrier that prevents people who haven't committed serious crimes from maintaining or looking for employment, getting to the doctor's office, taking children to school or daycare, going to the grocery store or looking for a place to live. It is also a barrier to decreasing our recidivism rate for released offenders trying to assimilate back into society and it harms employers who have trouble keeping enough workforce when their employees cannot get to work.

Our current law is unnecessarily punitive and counterproductive and has disproportionately hurt thousands of low-income Kansans who have little to no savings. Financially speaking, driver's license suspensions has created a vicious unending cycle of poverty for a lot of people that lack the means to expeditiously pay off their debt of fines and court fees. It also makes it nearly impossible for many to work and generate necessary income to pay the fines and fees imposed. Consequently, many Kansans affected by the law end up driving with a suspended license, and risk accruing additional fines and penalties if caught.

The problem of suspended driver's licenses is exacerbated because, according to the Free to Drive Campaign, which is supported by conservative and liberal leaning organizations, 83% of Americans with a suspended license continue to drive even though they risk a criminal conviction, more fines and fees and incarceration. Then they end up getting multiple driving on a suspended license citation which makes them ineligible to apply for a restricted driver's license. Then people get frustrated and give up.

In the past two years, several states have taken action to reform their suspensions including MT, TX, VA, MI, CA, IA, MA and DC. Kansas needs to also provide some major relief to people with suspended driver's licenses, because a driver's license is essential to get around, including getting to work in a state where public transportation options are sporadic and limited.

Suspending driver's licenses for unpaid fees punishes the working poor and it is counterproductive. I encourage you to support the passage of House Bill 2434.

Committees: Financial Institutions Ins. & Pensions, Insurance, Joint Committee on Corrections & Juvenile Justice Oversight, Juvenile Justice Oversight, Kansas Criminal Justice Reform Commission