



Chairman Patton and Members of the Committee,

My name is Elizabeth Patton and I am the Deputy State Director of Americans for Prosperity-Kansas. We believe in the rule of law, and we believe that is better achieved if we end the practice of suspending a driver's license for being late on repaying their fines and fees. We ask the committee to support HB 2434 and take a step in the right direction to help achieve the goal of ending the proverbial "revolving door" of crimes and penalties and instead make a policy that helps people stay on the right path. We do not believe it is a good practice to suspend a license for a non-public safety purpose and put people in an impossible situation where they must choose between a job (their means of paying their fine) and obeying the law.

We want to make sure the thousands of people who are affected by this have a job when they need to pay their fines rather than lose their ability to pay. Over the past year, we have discussed at length in our state about how to end the revolving door of legal issues and fines which easily compound on people who are not criminal actors and therefore shouldn't take up the focus of law enforcement's valuable resources. Expending police and court resources to arrest, try, and punish individuals for driving with suspended licenses for unpaid fees carries significant costs of its own that in many cases undoubtedly outweigh the original sums outstanding.

Additionally, suspending someone's license for non-public safety or traffic reasons does not make our roads safer and actually puts more unlicensed and uninsured drivers on the road. These are counter-intuitive measures that demand reform. Many other states across the country, including Texas, Virginia, Mississippi, and Montana have all made significant reforms to current laws to stop this cycle of suspension for failure to pay.

The Kansas Supreme Court Ad Hoc Committee on Bonding Practices, Fines, and Fees in Municipal Courts wrote, "Unfortunately, [driver's license suspension] is also very effective in trapping indigent defendants in a vicious cycle. It begins with the defendant being indigent and therefore incapable of paying the fine. The defendant's driver's license is then suspended for failing to pay the fine. The defendant is unable to travel to work because of the suspended driver's license and is still incapable of paying the fine."

To keep our communities safe and Kansans employed, therefore more able to meaningfully contribute to their families and our state, we can make this small policy reform to set ourselves in the right direction. According to a [Milwaukee study](https://dc.uwm.edu/eti_pubs/186/)¹, a valid driver's license is a more accurate predictor of sustained employment than a GED diploma among public assistance recipients, who are twice as likely to be employed above the poverty level when they have a valid driver's license. A [New Jersey study](http://vtc.rutgers.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/MVC-DL-Suspension-Study-Final-Report-Vol1_9-13-07_.pdf)² found that 42% of people who had their license suspended lost their jobs, half of those were unable to find new employment, and almost all who did made less than before.

¹ https://dc.uwm.edu/eti_pubs/186/

² http://vtc.rutgers.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/MVC-DL-Suspension-Study-Final-Report-Vol1_9-13-07_.pdf

Finally, by instituting a “Compliance Assistance Program” to help drivers repay fines and fees in a manner appropriate to their incomes and allowing driver’s licenses to be re-instated, Phoenix, AZ helped 41.2% of its program participants increase their income (a median increase of \$24,000). Over 9 months, the city generated an estimated \$150 million in GDP during the 9-month study period, merely by allowing people to drive again. The Arizona experience with stopping this practice suggests that repayment is more, not less, likely when people have access to their car.

HB 2434 helps to eliminate a barrier that creates a two tiered society, a barrier navigable by our most well off and insurmountable by those who struggle to most to make ends meet. People should make restitution and pay their debts, but we believe driver’s license revocation should not be the first step to trying to make that happen. Our incentives are currently misplaced and we ask that you support this bill for a better solution.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Patton
Deputy State Director
AFP-KS