

TESTIMONY OF MIKE FONKERT  
JUST CAMPAIGN DIRECTOR  
KANSAS APPLESEED CENTER FOR LAW AND JUSTICE

SENATE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE  
**IN SUPPORT OF SB 275**  
JANUARY 30, 2020

Members of the Senate Transportation Committee:

My name is Mike Fonkert; I am the Just Campaign Director for the Kansas Appleseed Center for Law and Justice, a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to the belief that Kansans, working together, can build a state full of thriving, inclusive, and just communities.

**Kansas Appleseed supports SB 275.**

This bill helps alleviate the vicious cycle that traps so many Kansas driver's in a no-win situation. More than 213,000 Kansans have suspended driver's licenses.<sup>1</sup> In 2018, Kansas had the fifth highest suspension rate in the country.<sup>2</sup> Many people still drive with suspended licenses, because they have no choice if they want to provide for their families.<sup>3</sup> The additional 90-day suspension period and the eligibility limit on restricted driving privileges limit people's lives in important ways. Driving a car is often necessary for important life tasks: like maintaining employment, buying groceries, or taking kids to doctor's appointments and school activities.<sup>4</sup>

Extending driver's license suspensions harm communities. The effect is not only felt by the person receiving the suspension. Stress placed on families and communities as a result of suspensions result in unemployment, under employment, lower wages, fewer employment opportunities, fewer hiring choices for employers, decreased productivity in communities, and an increase in insurance costs.<sup>5</sup> Suspensions also disproportionately harm communities of color. Suspension rates in communities with the highest percentage of people of color are 2.5 times greater than in communities with the smallest percent of people of color.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Pedraza, P. "KAKE NEWS INVESTIGATES: Avoiding a suspended license as numbers climb." KAKE News. 2019.  
<http://www.kake.com/story/41224567/kake-news-investigates-avoiding-a-suspended-license-as-numbers-climb>

<sup>2</sup> Insurify Insights. "The 10 States with the Most Suspended/Revoked Licenses." 2018.  
<https://insurify.com/insights/the-10-states-with-the-most-suspended-revoked-licenses/>

<sup>3</sup> Carpenter, T. "Kansas legislator says half of 213,000 with suspended licenses still driving." Topeka Capital-Journal. 2019.  
<https://www.cjonline.com/news/20191028/kansas-legislator-says-half-of-213000-with-suspended-licenses-still-driving>

<sup>4</sup> Gustitus, S. et al. "Access to Driving and License Suspension Policies for the Twenty-First Century Economy." 2008.  
<http://research.policyarchive.org/20441.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators. "Best Practices Guide to Reducing Suspended Drivers." 2013. p.6  
<https://www.aamva.org/Suspended-and-Revoked-Drivers-Working-Group/>

<sup>6</sup> Fines & Fees Justice Center. "FFJC Co-Founds Driven by Justice Coalition to End Driver's License Suspensions." 2019.  
<https://finesandfeesjusticecenter.org/2019/05/08/ffjc-co-founds-driven-by-justice-coalition-to-end-drivers-license-suspensions-for-nonpayment-of-traffic-tickets-in-new-york/>

Suspended licenses reduce public safety. States waste an average of 9 hours of police and court time for every suspended license case.<sup>7</sup> Police departments in cities that impose more fees and fines solve violent crimes at significantly lower rates.<sup>8 9</sup> It is common for municipal prosecutors in states that impose driver's license suspensions for unpaid fees and fines to spend 30% of their caseload on license suspension cases.<sup>10</sup>

This bill does not solve our state's driver's license suspension problem entirely, but it does take important steps by : 1) eliminating the additional 90 day suspension for suspended or revoked licenses and 2) ending the provision that prevents those with a stayed suspension as a result of a driving while suspended conviction from being able to receive a restricted license. While much more work will need to be done, both of these changes will have a positive impact on the lives of Kansans.

Kansas Appleseed supports the passage of SB 275.

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<sup>7</sup> American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators. "Best Practices Guide to Reducing Suspended Drivers." 2013. p.14  
<https://www.aamva.org/Suspended-and-Revoked-Drivers-Working-Group/>

<sup>8</sup> Goldstein, R., Sances, M., and You, H. "Exploitative Revenues, Law Enforcement, and the Quality of Government Service." 2016.  
[https://www.law.nyu.edu/sites/default/files/upload\\_documents/YOU\\_policing.pdf](https://www.law.nyu.edu/sites/default/files/upload_documents/YOU_policing.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> Eaglin, J. Brennan Center for Justice. "Driver's License Suspensions Perpetuate the Challenges of Criminal Justice Debt. 2015.  
<https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/analysis-opinion/drivers-license-suspensions-perpetuate-challenges-criminal-justice-debt>

<sup>10</sup> Rosario. Twin Cities Pioneer Press. "Bills would end court practices that hit the poor hardest." 2019.  
<https://www.twincities.com/2019/02/15/rosario-love-means-getting-these-bills-passed/>