



January 24, 2023

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Written Testimony in Support of SB 2  
Senate Committee on Transportation

Members of the Senate Committee on Transportation:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 2, which would provide an opportunity for restricted driving privileges for some Kansans with revoked licenses.. Kansas Appleseed Center for Law and Justice is 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 2.**

The changes in this bill help alleviate the vicious cycle that traps so many Kansas drivers in a no-win situation. In Kansas, we know that more than 134,000 Kansans have suspended driver's licenses for unpaid fees and fines alone,<sup>1</sup> giving Kansas the sixth highest suspension rate in the country.<sup>2</sup> We also know that driving a car is often necessary for important life tasks such as maintaining employment, buying groceries, or taking your kids to doctor's appointments and school activities.

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 results in unemployment, under employment, lower wages, fewer employment opportunities, fewer hiring choices for employers, decreased productivity in communities, and an increase in insurance costs. 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>3</sup>

Suspended licenses for anyone other than dangerous drivers hurts public safety. States waste an average of 9 hours of police and court time for every suspended license case.<sup>4</sup> Police departments in cities that impose more fees and fines solve violent crimes at significantly lower rates.<sup>5</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>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Kansas Department of Revenue. Data from Records Request by Kansas Appleseed. 2020.

<sup>2</sup> Insurify Insights. "Put it in Park: States with the Most License Suspensions." 2021. <https://insurify.com/insights/states-with-the-most-license-suspensions/>

<sup>3</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/>

<sup>4</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>5</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>6</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/>

The fix in this bill will help reduce some of this harm. But this bill does not solve our state's driver's license suspension problem entirely. To do that, Kansas must recognize that driver's license suspensions are not a "tool in the toolbox" that Kansas law enforcement need to do their job, contrary to what some may say. If anything, these suspensions are a tool that doesn't work as intended and hurts nearly everyone that it comes in contact with. If I purchased such a tool in my personal life, I'd be looking to return it for a full refund. Kansas lawmakers should do the same and put the "tool" of driver's license suspensions back where it belongs – as a mechanism to keep dangerous driver's off the road and nothing more. Any use of driver's license suspensions as a punitive or coercive measure have been shown time and again to be both ineffective and harmful to Kansans.

As stated by the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators, "The common belief that a driver license suspension provides effective, sustainable motivation to encourage individuals to comply with court ordered or legislated mandates to avoid suspension is not supported by empirical evidence."<sup>7</sup>

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this bill. For any further information, please contact me at [mfonkert@kansasappleseed.org](mailto:mfonkert@kansasappleseed.org).

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