

Dwight D. Eisenhower State Office Building
700 S.W. Harrison Street
Topeka, KS 66603-3745
Calvin E. Reed, P.E., Secretary
Joel Skelley, Director



Phone: 785-296-3585
Fax: 785-368-7415
kdot#publicinfo@ks.gov
<http://www.ksdot.gov>
Laura Kelly, Governor

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE
SENATE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE**

**REGARDING HOUSE BILL 2499
RELATING TO HANDS FREE PHONE USE WHILE DRIVING**

March 7, 2024

Mr. Chairman and Committee Members:

I am Joel Skelley, the Director of Policy for the Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT). I am here today to provide testimony on House Bill 2499. I would like to thank you for the opportunity to meet with you and to provide comments.

KDOT supports legislation to amend or create state laws that further enhance the safety of the traveling public and those that work on our roadways. The act of driving requires a person's full attention. Any action that takes a driver's hands off the wheel, eyes off the road or interrupts their train of thought is distracted driving and can create an unsafe driving environment for themselves and anyone else on or near the road. A driver engaging in talking, texting or interacting with a phone will exhibit similar traits to an impaired driver like trouble maintaining their lane, inconsistent speed, and slower reaction times.

Eliminating hand-held use of mobile phones while driving would increase safety in school and road construction zones. School zones are unique in that children and motor vehicles are in very close proximity and require drivers to have their full and undivided attention to driving. Road construction zones also bring motor vehicles and workers closer together. Many road construction zones have reduced lane widths, require non-traditional lane maneuvers, detours, and possible flagger operations. The potential for any one or combination of these changes in the roadway requires a driver to be fully focused on the task of driving so they can react safely and appropriately.

KDOT believes education is an important part of keeping our roadways safe. If enacted, KDOT will develop and conduct an educational campaign alerting drivers of this lifesaving law change. KDOT does this for all new safety law changes to help educate citizens that are traveling on our roadways as a part of our ongoing safety education efforts.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 2499. The agency respectfully asks the committee support passage of this bill. I am happy to answer any questions at the appropriate time.