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Oral Proponent Testimony

HB 2154 – Authorizing the department of education to contract with a private vendor to install and operate school bus cameras

Presented to the House Judiciary Committee

Wednesday, Feb. 10, 2021

3:30 p.m. Room 582-N

By Jim Porter, Chair, Kansas State Board of Education

Chair Patton and members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Kansas State Board of Education, I appreciate the opportunity to present written testimony in support of HB 2154. The State Board is very concerned about the safety of students in the process of loading and unloading school buses.

We conduct a survey annually on the number of vehicles that do not acknowledge school bus stop arms during the loading and unloading of students. Listed below are some of the results of the most recent surveys conducted.

One-day survey of Kansas School Districts

April 2019	220 of 286 districts reported 1040 violations
April 2020	214 of 286 districts reported 1030 violations

Kansas 30-day Survey 2017

57 school districts participating reported 9,967 violations

The important part of House Bill 2154 is that it is operated similar to what the Kansas Turnpike Authority (KTA) has successfully used for vehicles that travel through toll gates without paying the turnpike fee. The KTA sends a fine to the owner of the vehicle in violation of the law. This law would not replace the existing law, but would be a civil option to enforce stop arm violations.

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When this bill was proposed last year there had been no fatalities in Kansas related to Stop Arm violations. Unfortunately, this is no longer the case. On Sept. 9, 2020, seven-year-old Cecilia Rose Graff was struck and killed just east of Abilene on 2200 Avenue by a fifteen-year-old driver who did not stop for the school bus, which was stopped to pick up Cecilia and her siblings.

We believe this bill is a positive step forward in the effort to reduce the number of violations of the stop arm law, thus reducing the risk to Kansas school children. This type of enforcement works successfully in other states such as Alabama, Illinois, Virginia, Connecticut, New York, Georgia and Maryland.

On behalf of the safety of Kansas students, we would appreciate your support of House Bill 2154