

State of Kansas  
House of Representatives



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Chairman Rep. Russ Jennings  
Kansas House Corrections and Juvenile Justice Committee

**Re: Testimony HB 2547 / Suspended Licenses / Proponent**

Thank you, Chairman Jennings and Committee for this opportunity to provide support testimony on behalf of HB 2547, a recommendation from the Kansas Criminal Justice Reform Commission's Reentry Subcommittee.

The Reentry Subcommittee's primary objective was to help reduce the recidivism rate of Kansas inmates and identifying the lowest-hanging fruits or the least controversial measures to help them successfully reintegrate back into society. They are:

- 1) Reduce the current waiting process of 90 days to 30 days.
- 2) Eliminate the restricted driver's license fee of \$25.
- 3) Reduce the \$100 reinstatement fee from per citation to per case.

A report from the Kansas Department of Corrections indicated that over 50% of the inmates released each year have a suspended driver's license and suspended driver's licenses are one of the major barriers to inmates re-entering society. Without a driver's license it is difficult to visit their parole or probation officer, find a job or housing, pay child support, get to and from required medical treatment, etc. Suspended driver's licenses are also a huge barrier for other citizens of Kansas especially those who live in rural areas. Suspensions can keep unsafe drivers off the road but also can prevent people who haven't committed serious crimes from working, getting their children to school and getting out of debt. It also harms employers, who lose access to a sufficient workforce when their employees cannot get to work.

As of October 22, 2019, there were 139,661 licenses suspended for unpaid tickets and 30,004 restricted driver's licenses according to the Kansas Department of Revenue Division of Vehicles. Nationwide, Kansas is ranked number five for the most suspended driver's licenses according to Insurify, a car insurance quote website. The percent of drivers with suspended/revoked license is 4.94%, out of 2,2028,657 licensed drivers, and 980,359 registered automobiles. The other nine states in ascending order are ND, OH, IA, NB, MN, IA, ID, WI and OR. In the past two years, several states have taken action to reform their suspensions including MT, TX, VA, MI, CA, IA, MA and DC.

A driver's license is essential. Suspending driver's licenses for unpaid fees punishes the working poor and it is counterproductive. These three low-hanging fruit recommendations, if passed, would help alleviate some of the financial burden placed on suspended drivers, not DUI suspended. It may not seem like a lot of money to some, but to many these few changes would make the difference in trying to get a restricted license or their license back, versus giving up and continuing to drive without a license. According to the Free to Drive Campaign, which is supported by conservative and liberal leaning organizations, 83% of Americans driving a car multiple times a week, many continue driving even though they risk a criminal conviction, more fines and fees and incarceration.

We need to get our non-DUI suspended driver's back to driving legally again in Kansas. I appreciate this opportunity to provide testimony and hope you will support passage of House Bill 2547.

Respectfully Submitted by Representative Gail Finney

**Committees:** Financial Institutions Ins. & Pensions, Local Government, Transp. & Public Safety Budgets