

March 7, 2017

Amanda Gress, Director of Government Relations
Kansas Action for Children
Testimony in Support of House Bill 2076
Senate Transportation Committee

Chairman Petersen and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for considering House Bill 2076 to expand a proven, student-led program that improves child passenger safety. Kansas Action for Children's vision is to make Kansas the best state to raise a child, and our organization shapes health, education, and economic policies that benefit Kansas children and their families. As a part of our work to advance policy that improves the health and safety of Kansas children, Kansas Action for Children has advanced booster seat legislation, graduated drivers licensing implementation, and primary enforcement of teen seat belt usage. House Bill 2076, which has already passed the House, will further improve child passenger safety in Kansas.

Seat belts save lives. Most deaths and serious injuries from car accidents occur when occupants are not wearing seat belts. Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for U.S. teens. Wearing a seat belt is the best step Kansas teenagers can take to prevent death or serious injury in cars.

Seatbelts Are for Everyone (SAFE) is a student-led education program that has been proven to consistently increase seat belt use and reduce fatalities. Its proven results are paired with a great number of student champions who claim the SAFE message has saved their lives. This program, which originated in Southeast Kansas, also improves communication between communities and local law enforcement. Other states, including our neighbors, are working to bring SAFE to their schools.

Currently, SAFE is available in only one-fifth of Kansas' high schools. House Bill 2076 ensures the SAFE program is available in every Kansas high school at no cost to the State General Fund.

Kansas Action for Children respectfully requests that committee members act to save lives and prevent injuries by supporting House Bill 2076. Please do not hesitate to contact Kansas Action for Children by emailing me (amanda@kac.org) if we can answer questions or otherwise be of assistance.

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