



To: House Committee on Transportation
From: Shawn Steward – Manager, Public & Government Affairs
AAA Kansas
Date: February 14, 2024
Re: Support of HB 2680

Chairman Francis and members of the committee,

I write today to provide **AAA Kansas' support of HB 2680**, which creates a traffic infraction for leaving children, ages 8 and under, unattended in a motor vehicle.

AAA, nationwide and here in Kansas, is a leader and advocate for the safety and security of all travelers, including drivers and occupants of vehicles. On behalf of the more than 350,000 members AAA proudly serves in Kansas, we would like to thank you for the opportunity to offer support for legislation that will improve safety for young, vulnerable passengers who can face significant dangers when left alone in vehicles.

Hot Car Deaths

Sadly, each year, children are left unattended in vehicles and die of heat stroke and hyperthermia, as the temperatures inside vehicles quickly rise to deadly levels. Since 2000, 14 children in Kansas alone have died when left or trapped in hot vehicles. Nationwide, an average of 38 children die in hot cars each year, according to Kids and Car Safety, with 1,083 of those tragic fatalities occurring since 1990.

Cars Stolen with Children Inside

Despite what some may believe, children taken – either inadvertently or purposefully – during a vehicle theft is not a rare occurrence. In many cases, vehicles are stolen from a gas station or store parking lot when a parent or guardian leaves a child inside the car “just for a minute” while they go inside to shop or pay. Since 1999 in Kansas, there have been 33 instances in which a vehicle has been stolen while a child was present inside. Nationwide, between 2012 and 2022, there were nearly 1,600 vehicles stolen with a child alone inside.

AAA Kansas supports HB 2680 for the opportunities it provides to help prevent these dangerous and deadly situations for young children.

We also wholeheartedly support – and commit to participating in – the important educational aspect of this bill, which stipulates organizations drive broader public awareness of the dangers posed for children left unattended in cars by parents or care givers.

Thank you for considering this important child safety legislation, and we urge your support.

Respectfully,
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