



Chair Richard Proehl, Vice Chair Leo Delperdang, Ranking Minority Member Henry Helgerson, and Members of the House Transportation Committee:

On behalf of the Justice Action Network, the largest bipartisan organization in the country working to reform our state and federal criminal justice systems, **I write you today in strong support of House Bill 2193.** This bill would create more opportunity and economic development in Kansas by (1) rescinding certain fines and fees for driver's licenses, (2) limit additional periods of license suspension for those found guilty of driving with a suspended license.

A driver's license is essential to access employment, education, and childcare. Stranding Kansans without a license inhibits their economic development and ability to care for their families. JP Morgan Chase & Co summed up the lifeline a license represents succinctly: "Seventy-seven percent of people drive to work and nearly 30 percent of civilian jobs require driving a vehicle." Particularly onerous is the suspension of a license due to an unpaid fine or fee: without a license, the likelihood that a Kansan would be able to repay those fines and fees plummets.

According to research from Kansas, 137,450 Kansas driver's licenses were suspended due to unpaid fees and fines, the fifth highest rate of suspension in the country. Further, 71% of new suspensions imposed in 2019 were due to unpaid tickets, court costs, or fines. These suspensions can quickly compound and result in further consequences within the criminal justice system, which should be prioritizing individuals who pose a true public safety threat. The most direct route to reducing suspensions for unpaid fines and fees is to eliminate those fines and fees themselves, a clear solution found in House Bill 2193.

Many states have begun to move away from suspending licenses for unpaid traffic tickets, fines, or fees, including several conservative states such as Kentucky, West Virginia, Montana, Idaho, and Georgia. And Michigan just passed landmark reforms to address license suspensions. Those states have realized that this hasn't been an effective enforcement mechanism and has led to increased costs to the system and to families. Further, as Kansas works to recover from the impact of COVID-19, a driver's license is critical lifeline that will allow residences to return to the workforce and get the economy moving again.

Thank you for considering this important bill. It is essential that Kansas equips and supports those that want to work and support their families. House Bill 2193 is an important step towards that goal, and we urge your approval of this measure.

Sincerely,

Jeanette Bottler
Deputy Director, the Justice Action Network