

CALVIN H. HAYDEN
SHERIFF



DOUGLAS G. BEDFORD
UNDERSHERIFF

DUTY HONOR SERVICE
588 E. SANTA FE, SUITE 2000
OLATHE, KS 66061
www.jocosherriff.org

Testimony to the Senate Committee on Judiciary in Support of HB2093 March 22, 2021

Chair Warren and Members of the Committee:

The International Association of Chiefs of Police has researched auto theft across the country and the world. The Auto Theft Educational Awareness Working Group has been researching vehicle theft with the goal to educate law enforcement executives, their departments, and the public as to the importance of and connection between vehicle crime and subsequent violent crime. In their latest report they state, "This awareness is important to prevent violent crime sprees and their repercussions and to ignite support vital to the sustainability and longevity of auto theft investigative and prosecutorial units across the globe."¹

Auto thefts in Johnson County have been increasing since 2015 and in recent years have seen a bump in frequency. In 2015 and 2016 we had one stolen vehicle (each year) reported to the sheriff's office according to our records. In 2018, there were 13 stolen cars reported to the Johnson County Sheriff's Office. 2019 saw a 200% jump with 39 cars reported. In 2020 we had 43 vehicles reported stolen to our agency – a 10% increase. Our patrol jurisdiction – the unincorporated parts of Johnson County and the cities of De Soto and Edgerton – cover around 40% of the county geography, an area of approximately 208 square miles. This does not include vehicles that have been reported stolen from other jurisdictions within the county. Cities in Johnson County report a larger increase in vehicle thefts than we did.²

Chris McDonald, chair of the IACP's Vehicle Crimes Committee and executive director of the Maryland Vehicle Theft Prevention Council, says the statistics show these are not "joyriding"

¹ Auto Theft Educational Awareness Working Group of the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) Vehicle Crimes Committee, "Vehicle Crimes Auto Theft Educational Awareness Report," May 2017, accessed January 25, 2021 https://www.theiacp.org/sites/default/files/2018-09/IACP%20VCC%20Auto%20Theft%20Educational%20Awareness%20Report_0.pdf ,.

² Sam Zeff, "Car Thefts Skyrocket In Johnson County In 2020, Setting A Record In Overland Park," January 15, 2021, accessed January 25, 2021, <https://www.kcur.org/news/2021-01-15/car-thefts-skyrocket-in-johnson-county-in-2020-setting-a-record-in-overland-park>

CALVIN H. HAYDEN
SHERIFF



DOUGLAS G. BEDFORD
UNDERSHERIFF

DUTY HONOR SERVICE
588 E. SANTA FE, SUITE 2000
OLATHE, KS 66061
www.jocosherriff.org

but rather an attempt to permanently deprive an owner of their property. These same statistics that the Vehicle Crimes Committee researched demonstrate that auto theft is a gateway crime – 97% of car thieves also face other serious charges. Stolen vehicles are used for crimes like shooting, robberies, homicides, drug deals and insurance fraud.³

The Johnson County Sheriff's Office supports the changes to statute that HB2093 proposes:

- The addition of adding operation of a stolen vehicle to fleeing/eluding makes the offense a felony rather than a misdemeanor.
- The addition of a fine not less than \$500 when operating a stolen vehicle; and
- In the prosecution of theft of a motor vehicle, fleeing, or attempting to elude a police officer is prima facie evidence of intent to permanently deprive the owner of the possession, use, or benefit of the vehicle.

Last year, HB2448 was heard in House Judiciary and passed the House by a vote of 98-25. HB2093 is HB2448 (2020) as it was amended. HB2448 contained a provision that was removed so it is not in this bill, HB2093. We would like to see it added in, however.

Theft of property that is a motor vehicle as defined in K.S.A. 8-126, and amendments thereto, of the value of less than \$1,500 is a severity level 10, nonperson felony.

This language would be a victim centered amendment to the bill. A means of offering some level of justice for those Kansans whose vehicle is under the monetary amount to be charged with felony theft. Data we have researched indicates that approximately 31% of stolen vehicles in Kansas in 2017 were valued below \$1500. These vehicles are more likely to be owned by lower income families and, in many instances, are the only means of transportation the family has. It is also less likely that these vehicles are covered for theft by insurance policies. These families are hit exceptionally hard by the loss of a vehicle they may not be able to readily replace. Learning that the theft of their livelihood is only a misdemeanor charge can be disheartening.

³ Auto Theft Educational Awareness Working Group of the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) Vehicle Crimes Committee, "Vehicle Crimes Auto Theft Educational Awareness Report," May 2017, accessed January 25, 2021 https://www.theiacp.org/sites/default/files/2018-09/IACP%20VCC%20Auto%20Theft%20Educational%20Awareness%20Report_0.pdf .

CALVIN H. HAYDEN
SHERIFF



DOUGLAS G. BEDFORD
UNDERSHERIFF

DUTY HONOR SERVICE
588 E. SANTA FE, SUITE 2000
OLATHE, KS 66061
www.jocosherriff.org

The Johnson County Sheriff's Office feels that this bill will make an impact on the increasing auto theft rate in our county and state. The addition of our requested amendment would make this an even better bill.

We ask that the committee recommend the bill favorably for passage.

Greg Smith
Special Deputy Sheriff for Government, Veteran, and Crime Victim Affairs
Johnson County Sheriff's Office
913.329.2954
gregory.smith@jocogov.org