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**Testimony presented to the
House Committee on Transportation**

House Bill 2499

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Chairman Francis and members of the House Committee on Transportation, Safe Kids Kansas is pleased to provide testimony in support of HB 2499. Safe Kids Kansas is a nonprofit coalition of partnering agencies, organizations and businesses, whose mission is to prevent unintentional injuries and injury-related death to Kansas children.

Summary of Issue and Position:

As injury prevention specialists and safety advocates, we know that driving a vehicle weighing two or more tons on our roadways is a serious responsibility. The driver must process hundreds of tiny decisions each mile driven and manage numerous distractions that take place in our vehicle. In the matter of just a moment, the driver's attention may be pulled away putting lives at risk. According to the Centers for Disease Control, younger, inexperienced drivers have the highest proportion of distraction-related fatal crashes. Their lack of driving experience can contribute to misjudgments if they become distracted. While mobile phones pose a distraction hazard for drivers of all ages, we support this proposal to ban handheld use of phones for those drivers under the age of 18, and all drivers in high-risk environments such as construction zones and school zones, as a step toward safer roads for all.

Data from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), show distracted driving claimed 3,522 lives in the U.S. in 2021 alone. In addition, a 2021 National Occupant Protection Use Survey (NOPUS) conducted by NHTSA found that 2.5% of drivers stopped at intersections were talking on hand-held phones at any moment during the day. Combining this observational data with self-reported data on hand-held and hands-free phone use, the federal government estimates that 7.6% of drivers were using a hand-held or hands-free cellphone during any moment of the day. In the same survey, 3.4% of drivers were observed manipulating hand-held devices or infotainment systems. The rate was highest, at 5.4%, for drivers estimated to be 16-24 years old. As drivers, it is our responsibility to take caution and be aware of our surroundings, or else it can result in serious or fatal consequences.

Safe Kids Kansas supports HB 2499 and reasonable penalties to reduce risks associated with handheld phone use to keep all individuals safer on our roads, especially in high-risk areas such as construction zones and school zones.

