



Kansas

PO Box 917
Mission, KS 66201

(913) 490-4100

aclukansas.org

SB 2 Proponent Testimony – Written Only

Aileen Berquist, Policy Director
American Civil Liberties Union of Kansas

Senate Judiciary Committee
Monday February 13, 2023 10:30am

Committee Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Aileen Berquist and I am the Policy Director for the American Civil Liberties Union of Kansas. We are a nonpartisan, non-profit organization that works to preserve and strengthen the civil rights and liberties of every person in Kansas. Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony today.

The ACLU of Kansas supports the passage of SB 2, a bill that would provide a pathway to restricted driving privileges for individuals whose license was suspended or revoked due to failure to comply with a traffic citation.

Kansas has one of the highest rates of DL suspensions in the country.¹ Restrictions on driving licenses, such as suspensions and revocations, have been needlessly keeping people in a cycle of debt and harming their ability to get to work, take their children to school, get healthcare, and do the everyday things that people need to do to be productive. SB 2 can help solve this avoidable problem.

Kansas's public transportation system is inadequate, particularly in the more rural areas of the state. People with suspended licenses continue driving because they have no choice. Each time they get on the road they risk a criminal conviction, more fines and fees they can't afford, and even jail time. SB 2 would provide these Kansans with a pathway to driving legally.

SB 2 will allow some people with a suspended license to drive to get to work, school, the grocery store, and to be able to acquire the necessities of life. Given the absolute necessity of driving for people in Kansas, people can easily rack up multiple convictions for DL suspension in a short time frame, placing them in a cycle of poverty and further entanglement with the criminal justice system. This problem is significant across the state: in October 2019, driver's license suspensions in the state numbered over 210,000. Recent news reports put that number at

¹ <https://www.kcur.org/news/2022-09-06/more-than-30-000-kansans-with-suspended-licenses-could-have-kept-driving-legally-last-year>
<https://insurify.com/insights/states-with-the-most-license-suspensions/>

277,000.² That's over a quarter of a million Kansans whose ability to go about their daily lives and contribute to the state's economic growth is circumscribed by their ability to drive legally.

While the ACLU of Kansas supports the bill, we would urge an amendment that strikes the provision in Section 2 (B) iii creating a new crime for violating the conditions of the restricted license. While the state has made progress in recent years, including allowing individuals to petition the court to waive fines and fees that are a barrier to license reinstatement, comprehensive driver's license suspension reform is still a critical issue. Kansas needs to place an emphasis on comprehensive driver's license suspension reform. SB 2 is one step in that process. The ACLU of Kansas supports SB 2 with the removal of provisions creating a new crime and urges this Committee to take action to see that it is passed into law.

² <https://www.kfdi.com/2022/09/29/drivers-license-restoration-program-getting-started-in-wichita/>