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Chair Warren, Vice-Chair Wilborn, Ranking Minority Member Corson, and members of the committee,

My name is Noah Bein, and I am state policy manager for the Justice Action Network (JAN), an organization working with state legislators across the country to advance bipartisan criminal justice laws that keep the public safe. I write today to testify neutrally on Senate Bill 500, with concerns about its efficacy and a strong preference for your committee to instead enact Senate Bill 440. To be clear, we believe both SB 500 and SB 440 are attempting to address a serious problem that is crippling Kansas' economy: **127,116 Kansans** have their driver's license suspended or held solely due to unpaid fines and fees—a figure recently estimated to result in **\$1.61 billion in earnings losses** suffered by the state each year.ⁱ

Yet SB 500 offers only half-measure that puts Kansas at a competitive disadvantage relative to the many states that have enacted a more effective solution: simply prohibiting debt-based driver's license suspensions or holds. This full prohibition is the approach taken in Senate Bill 440, which JAN supports as a complete solution to the issue at hand. Kansans deserve the same laws on this issue as Mississippi, Kentucky, Georgia, Michigan, Idaho, West Virginia, Wyoming, Montana, Utah, among other states.ⁱⁱ What does Kansas know that lawmakers in these states do not? And why should Kansas' economy suffer because of this discrepancy? We hope that your committee will consider these questions as you examine this important issue.

Conservative lawmakers strongly support prohibiting the suspension of driver's licenses due to failure to pay or appear.

- As mentioned above, state law does not allow suspensions or holds for failure to pay in states like Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, and Utah, among many others.
- Full prohibition—which SB 440 would enact—is model policy issued by the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC). In 2018, ALEC issued a "[Resolution in Support of Limiting Driver's License Suspensions to Violations that Involve Dangerous Driving](#)."ⁱⁱⁱ The resolution states:
 - *"A person whose driver's license is suspended will often find it more difficult to earn a living and therefore pay the debt they owe to the government. The number of individuals with a suspended license also places a burden on the limited resources of law enforcement. This resolution encourages state policymakers to revise laws to limit driver's license suspensions imposed for violations against the government to conduct that involves offenders with dangerous driving such as drunk driving or multiple moving violations."*



Numerous studies show that states pay an enormous economic cost for suspending driver's licenses for reasons unrelated to dangerous driving. In Kansas, those losses total more than \$1.6 billion.

- In a brief released last year, one analysis *conservatively* estimated that each driver's license suspended or held due to unpaid fines and fees results in ***an average of \$12,700 in annual earnings losses.***
- This means the 127,116 debt-based driver's licenses in Kansas lose the state's economy ***\$1.61 billion each year.***
- These are losses that Kansas' economy must suffer while other states are unburdened.

These suspensions also impose a public safety penalty on Kansas by diverting scarce law enforcement time away from fighting violent crime.

- As a former staffer for the Charles Koch Institute once put it: "...when an already overburdened police force must use finite resources and expend significant staff hours to pull over, transport, often jail, and attend court dates with safe drivers who have been driving with a suspended license, it decreases public safety."^{iv}

Kansas' reforms in this area should reflect the best possible policy and practice, not a half-measure that unnecessarily complicates statute and continues to hobble Kansas' economy by allowing drivers to lose their license for reasons completely unrelated to unsafe driving. With this in mind, we ask that you set aside SB 500 and consider the correct solution on offer from SB 440.

If JAN can assist your committee by providing research, state examples, or other information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

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ⁱ The estimate of the number of Kansans' with driver's licenses suspended or held solely due to unpaid fines and fees was provided by the Kansas Department of Revenue.

ⁱⁱ For example, see: Mississippi HB 1352 (2019) <https://billstatus.ls.state.ms.us/documents/2019/pdf/HB/1300-1399/HB1352SG.pdf>;

ⁱⁱⁱ Resolution in Support of Limiting Driver's License Suspensions to Violations that Involve Dangerous Driving,, <https://alec.org/model-policy/resolution-in-support-of-limiting-drivers-license-suspensions-to-violations-that-involve-dangerous-driving/>

^{iv} "Common sense on crime and driver's licenses," Ewan Watt, USA Today, March 2, 2017, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2017/03/02/dont-suspend-drivers-licenses-for-no-good-reason-column/98481984/>