



**To:** Senate Committee on Transportation  
**From:** Travis R. Lowe  
AAA Kansas  
**Date:** March 7, 2024  
**Re:** Support of HB 2499

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to offer remarks in support of HB 2499.

I am Travis Lowe appearing on behalf of AAA Kansas. Since AAA's founding in 1902, the not-for-profit, fully tax-paying organization has been a leader and advocate for the safety and security of all travelers. AAA proudly serves over 350,000 Kansans. On behalf of AAA, we would like to thank you for the opportunity to offer support for legislation that will improve road safety for auto drivers as well as those maintaining Kansas roads.

HB 2499 is a "limited hands free bill" that applies to the most inexperienced drivers and areas with vulnerable bystanders at risk. The bill would prohibit the handheld use of a cell phone for drivers under the age of 18 when they are on Kansas roads, plus all drivers who drive through a work construction zone when workers are present and a school zone during designated hours. HB 2499 does not ban the use of cell phones or other technology to be used in the vehicle.

To ensure clarity for the situations when this bill would pertain to all drivers, this would only apply in two scenarios. The first scenario is work construction zones when workers are present. Work construction zones are marked on roads when drivers enter or exit the zones with orange signs. Work construction zones generally see hazardous conditions, including temporary re-routing of driving lanes, uneven lanes, concrete barriers, nearby machinery and most importantly, workers by the side of the road. The second scenario is a school zone during designated hours. This would only apply during posted designated hours, which often are accompanied by flashing lights. Such designated hours are usually when students are expected to arrive or leave school. This would not apply to college campuses or early childhood education, only K through 12 schools.

For drivers under the age of 18, this would apply anytime driving on a Kansas road.

According to Kansas Department of Transportation statistics, the state averages 15,000 crashes due to distracted driving each year, thus about 1 in 4 crashes are attributed to inattention. This bill is a step in the right direction to help reduce distracted driving on Kansas roads.

The majority of states have laws restricting handheld use by drivers under the age of 18. The bill does not supersede a local government that has more stringent laws, but it will create a minimum threshold across the state.

AAA Kansas is joined by many stakeholders that worked together to find a pragmatic approach to address distracted driving. HB 2499 does not restrict the use of emerging vehicle technology and it provides for exemptions for making emergency calls.

We respectfully urge your support of the bill. Thank you again for the opportunity to speak on this matter.

Respectfully,

Travis Lowe