



Testimony in Opposition to Senate Bill 17 Senate Committee on Transportation

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The Kansas Highway Patrol (KHP) appreciates the opportunity to provide written testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 17 and respectfully requests that the Committee consider our agency's concerns.

Senate Bill 17 gives haulers of grain and other agricultural goods a variance from the gross weight limitations found in K.S.A. 8-1909, often referred to as the "Bridge Chart." This bill applies to both traditional farm and commercial operations, and it allows truck tractor and semi-trailer combinations to be 12.5% heavier on a rear single axle and 10% heavier on tandem, triple, or quad axles for the weights listed in statute. Kansas thrives on agricultural business. We understand that the quick movement of large quantities of grain products is vital for commerce, and Senate Bill 17 seeks to facilitate that movement. However, we would like to bring several negative aspects of the bill to the Committee's attention.

First, the amount of relief provided by Senate Bill 17 is limited due to portable scale tolerances and current allowable gross weight in Kansas. When enforcing weight restrictions on vehicles with portable scales, KHP provides a maximum overweight tolerance of 1,000 lbs. on single axles and 1,500 lbs. on double axles. Above these tolerances, citations are issued unless extenuating circumstances exist (e.g., the accumulation of ice, snow, or mud). The maximum gross weight allowed in Kansas without a permit is 85,500 lbs. so long as the vehicle combination remains on Kansas-maintained roadways and does not travel on the Interstate system. This bill asks that grain products be allowed to weigh either 10% or 12.5% more than the maximum weight shown on the Bridge Chart. However, lines 30-31 on page 3 of the bill would prohibit combinations from being over 90,000 lbs. Between the 85,500 lbs. of gross weight currently allowed and the portable scale tolerances provided by KHP, very little relief, if any, is being offered by Senate Bill 17.

Missouri has a similar law to Senate Bill 17; however, the maximum gross weight allowed without a permit on any Missouri roadway is only 80,000 lbs. This brings the maximum weight allowed for grain haulers to 88,000 lbs. With the tolerances granted by KHP on portable scales and the fact that vehicles can currently weigh up to 85,500 lbs., our enforcement is very similar to the Missouri law passed in 2015. Additionally, a farm operation in Kansas may already apply for an annual permit allowing them to transport up to 90,000 lbs. if the combination has 6 axles or more.

Second, vehicles with greater weights cause disproportionate damage to roads. The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) determined that a truck tractor and semi-trailer combination loaded to the federal limit of 80,000 lbs. has the same impact on an Interstate highway as 9,600 automobiles. While

KHP is not responsible for maintaining roadways, we enforce the laws enacted by the Legislature to help slow their deterioration.

Third, an increase in a vehicle's weight impacts its ability to slow down, stop, or perform evasive maneuvers. As technology changes in the automobile industry, passenger cars have become lighter, while commercial motor vehicles (CMVs) have generally increased in weight. The impact of this discrepancy is not lost on our officers and on those who have been involved in CMV collisions. While many factors influence stopping distances, increased weight has a significant effect.

Fourth, the bill language requires clarification as it pertains to certain aspects of enforcement. Should the Committee wish to recommend the bill for passage, KHP would respectfully request that the Committee consider amending the bill to clarify whether it is intended only for farm operations or includes commercial agriculture operations such as custom harvesters. Because KHP is also tasked with enforcing registered vehicle weights, we would also respectfully request that the Committee consider amending the bill to clarify whether being overweight by registration is still a violation.

In conclusion, the Kansas Highway Patrol opposes Senate Bill 17. We appreciate the relief it is attempting to bring to our agricultural producers, but we believe the bill's negative aspects outweigh its benefits. We sincerely thank the members of this Committee for considering our testimony.

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