

**Testimony on SB 274 relating to Boater Education Requirements
To
The House Committee on Transportation**

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SB 274, as amended, seeks to change requirements related to safety belts as well as boater education requirements. **The Department supports the provisions related to boater education contained in the bill.** The provisions of the bill would be effective on publication in the statute book.

Current law requires all persons born on and after January 1, 1989 to possess a certificate of completion of a boating safety course authorized by the Department in order to operate a motorboat or sailboat on Kansas public waters. Those over 21 are exempt from the requirement. The legal age for operation of a motor vessel in Kansas is 12. As amended, the bill would exempt those in an instructor led sailboat course from the requirements of boater education utilizing a sailboat of less than 16 feet, 7 inches in length.

The committee should note that also that the Department has proposed mandatory boater education being phased in, the same as hunter education and furharvester education, in House Bill 2117 this session.

Boater Education is largely an Internet-based safety course and provided free of charge by the Department. Approximately 1700 people took the Kansas boater education course last calendar year. And approximately 42 states require boater education in some fashion.

The Department suggested the original legislation in 2000 to address the trend of escalating boating-related accidents, fatalities, and property damage. Kansas averages about 33 boating-related accidents per year, 3 fatalities per year and hundreds of thousands of dollars per year in property damage and insurance claims. Finally, the vast majority of vessel accidents in Kansas involve an operator over the age of 21.

The Department appreciates the opportunity to address the bill and the support of the committee in favorable passage of the bill.