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Senate Transportation Committee
Testimony of Ron Gaches on behalf of AAA Kansas
Supporting SB 274: Statewide Implementation of SAFE Program
Tuesday, March 17, 2015

Thank you Chairman Peterson for this opportunity to speak in support of SB 274. On behalf of the Seat Belts are For Everyone Coalition, we strongly support SB 274 as a compromise to create funding for expansion of the SAFE program for all Kansas high schools.

This bill is different in two major ways from our original legislation. First, the bill generates sufficient money to only expand SAFE into all Kansas high schools. We have taken expansion of the program into middle schools out of this effort. Second, the fund mechanism is a \$20 fine increase to create a \$30 total fine, with no court costs. The percentages in the fine distribution formula have been updated by the Office of Judicial Administration to hold harmless all other stakeholders who benefit from the fine.

We've heard the feedback that a fine increase to \$60 was too high. And we've heard from leadership that funding the program through the State General Fund won't receive consideration on the floor of the Senate.

Our revised bill is a balanced approach to expanding an award winning seat belt education program. There is no mandate, and there is no increased cost on all Kansans. Only those who choose to not wear their seat belts will help pay to expand SAFE statewide.

In a scientifically correct, independent poll of Kansas, respondents overwhelmingly supported an increase in the primary seat belt fine. The vast majority of Kansans believe the adult penalty for primary seat belt violation should be more than the \$30 fine included in the bill.

Passage of this bill will save lives, reduce injuries and build a safer environment on our roads and highways. We urge your support.

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