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**Testimony to the House Committee on Judiciary
In Support of HB2347
February 14, 2025**

Chair Humphries and Committee Members:

Our associations are in support of HB2347 strengthening the auto theft laws. Auto thefts continue to be an issue across Kansas. From 2020 through 2023, we averaged 8373 vehicles stolen in Kansas per year. That is an average of 23 per day or one every 57 minutes. While the trend seems to be dropping slightly, the 2023 auto theft rate is about 5% above the 10-year average. Some of these vehicles are stolen to use in other crimes.

The amendment found on Page 1 lines 15-16 is to address one of the issues we have in getting convictions when we catch an offender in possession of a stolen car. Current language requires proving the person in possession of the vehicle either is the one that stole it or actually knows it was stolen. Absent a confession, it is very difficult to prove what the person had knowledge the vehicle is stolen. Even if the ignition is punched or the vehicle can be operated without a key the current language creates challenges. The phrase “reason to know” is used in five other criminal statutes and in one traffic statute, KSA 8-116, relating to stolen antique vehicles. This change is consistent with other statutes.

The second amendment, found on page 2, lines 16-17, makes the crime of theft of a vehicle under \$1500 value a SL 10 felony. It is currently an A misdemeanor. Even as a SL10 felony the sentencing will be presumptive probation absent the offender having two or more person felony convictions. We believe this change is justified and important because of the ancillary damage done to many victims of stolen vehicles in this value range. People with these types of cars rarely have insurance to cover their loss and often it is their only vehicle. This has adverse effects on their ability to get to work, medical appointments, and other daily needs. These owners are often financially struggling. The harm caused to these victims is much more than the value of the vehicle. I haven't updated my data on this for a few years, but the last time I checked about 14% of the stolen motor vehicles in Kansas were valued below \$1500.

We encourage you to move HB2347 forward favorably.

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