

February 5, 2013

Honorable Senator Jeff King
Judiciary Committee
300 SW 10th Street, Room 341-S
Topeka, KS 66612

Re: Support for Senate Bill No. 6

I, Marilyn Harp, Executive Director of Kansas Legal Services (KLS), work in conjunction with clients from the Topeka Moving Ahead Program (T-MAP). T-MAP is a job readiness program offered through KLS for individuals experiencing homelessness in an effort to help individuals get back in the workforce and become self sufficient. Through my work with these clients I have witnessed individuals being forced to turn down employment due to a suspended driver's license. Several businesses in the Topeka community require an individual to have a valid driver's license for employment. Individuals are limited to using the bus system in order to get to work. Due to the bus system only running until 6:15 p.m. those with suspended licenses are unable to take shift jobs (including factory, retail, and restaurant work) that end after 5 p.m. unless they are within walking distance of their home.

One example I would like to share is that of Jackie, a single mom with two children, who is currently staying at the Topeka Rescue Mission. Jackie went through the T-MAP program and graduated, but the only barrier for her obtaining a job is her suspended driver's license. She did her T-MAP internship at Kansas Neurological Institute (KNI) working with the residents. KNI was so impressed with Jackie that they offered her a full time position. She was unable to accept the position due to the company policy that every employee must have a current valid driver's license. Jackie has been actively working to pay off her fines, but is only able to afford a little bit a month while the rest of her resources go to support her children. If Jackie had a temporary restricted license to remove the barrier of finding employment, she would have a sustainable income allowing her not only to pay off the remaining amount owed, but she and her children would become self sufficient and get back into a home.

The current administration has emphasized their desire to create jobs in order to improve the Kansas economy and I believe this bill would remove a substantial barrier preventing many KS residents from obtaining the employment they desperately need. At no cost to the state this is a great program to reinstate to give people the opportunity to continue working or find new employment in order to pay off the fines associated with their suspension. I would like The Transportation Committee for allowing me the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill No. 6.

Sincerely,

Marilyn Harp
Executive Director
Kansas Legal Services
712 S. Kansas Avenue, Suite 200
Topeka, KS 66603