



February 11, 2015
Testimony in Opposition of HB2159
Submitted by Christopher Mann
MADD Kansas Advisory Board / National Board of Directors

Honorable Chairman Barker and Members of the House Committee on Judiciary:

Thank you for the opportunity to address you in opposition of House Bill 2159. I am a volunteer and advocate for Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) as well as the victim of a drunk driver. Prior to the crash that ended my career, I was a police officer in Lawrence Kansas and after was a prosecutor in Wyandotte County Kansas. MADD is opposed to HB2159

Every day in America, another 28 people die as a result of drunk driving crashes. (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration FARS data, 2014). Kansas has made substantial progress over the past few years in strengthening DUI laws and in turn has seen a reduction in DUI fatalities on our roadways. The efforts in Kansas have earned it a five-star rating from MADD. One of only 13 states to receive such a rating. What's more important is the laws we have passed have allowed offenders the opportunity to learn to correct their behavior, to change their habits and hopefully not become a habitual problem for our state.

This bill aims in part to remove "diversions" from the conviction calculation for habitual violator status in Kansas. According to the National Department of Transportation about one-third of all drivers arrested or convicted of drunk driving are repeat offenders. A full two-thirds are first time offenders and for those who received diversion, it worked. For the one-third who did not get the message and do not stop their irresponsible behavior, rewarding them is not the solution.

This change would only serve to reward habitual offenders with a "free" offense. It would give extra chances to the State's most problematic drivers and could place our fellow citizens in danger. After years of saving the lives of Kansas citizens with smart, effective legislation, we don't need to reverse course and weaken our laws.

In 2010 the DUI Commission recommended the 10 year expungement period for DUIs. MADD will not oppose the expungement period of 7 years.

This bill in part, benefits the worst driving offenders in our community. Our citizens deserve better. I strongly urge a vote against this bill.

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