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Testimony to the House Transportation Committee In Support of HB2503 January 28, 2016

Chairperson Proehl and Committee Members,

The Kansas law enforcement community is a network of city, county, state and other specialized agencies standing together serving the people of Kansas. We are highly dependent on the support of our state law enforcement partners. This is true in all areas of the state, including rural and urban areas.

The Kansas Highway Patrol provides vital services to assist our local public safety efforts. Our rural areas are highly dependent on back up from the Highway Patrol. Our urban areas are dependent on the Highway Patrol to handle traffic related investigations and enforcement on our interstate, federal and state highways while our local forces concentrate on other law enforcement demands. Urban or rural KHP troopers and local law enforcement officers face the same criminals, the same risks, and the same challenges. We are always ready to assist each other as needed.

116 municipal law enforcement agencies (45%) have 5 or fewer officers.
184 municipal law enforcement agencies (71%) have 10 or fewer officers.
18 sheriff's offices (17%) have 5 or fewer deputies.
70 sheriff's offices (67%) have 10 or fewer deputies.

Over that past several years, the ability of the Highway Patrol to provide those services our local jurisdictions depend on has substantially diminished due to reductions in staffing. Urban areas previously patrolled 24/7 are now patrolled on a part time basis. Many of the counties in the state do not have a trooper residing in the county. Local agencies are spending more time working accidents and other traffic activities on the highways, pulling resources from other areas of local demand.

The patrol has proven itself over the years as an extremely professional law enforcement organization which we could depend on in time of great resource demands. While the Highway Patrol has maintained its professionalism, its ability to be ready to assist local law enforcement has become strained. Response times to assist local law enforcement appear to have increased. The number of on-duty officers available for such responses has decreased. And too often there simply is no trooper available when there was in the past.

It is time this essential public safety service of state government is restored. We support HB2503 as a method to move down this path. We encourage you to recommend the bill favorably for passage.

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