

March 9, 2016

Amanda Gress, Director of Government Relations
Kansas Action for Children

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 274
House Transportation Committee

Chairman Proehl and Members of the Committee:

Kansas Action for Children is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to shaping health, education, and economic policy that improves the lives of Kansas children and families. On behalf of the children of Kansas, we support Senate Bill 274. For more than a decade, Kansas Action for Children has spearheaded efforts to improve child passenger safety in Kansas by advancing booster seat legislation, graduated drivers licensing implementation, and primary enforcement of teen seat belt usage. Senate Bill 274 continues to improve child passenger safety, and passed the Kansas Senate with a vote of 33-2.

Seat belts save lives.

Most deaths and serious injuries from car accidents occur when occupants are not wearing seat belts. In 2013, 39 Kansas teenagers were involved in fatal motor vehicle accidents. This number accounts for nearly half of teen violent deaths reported in the Kansas KIDS COUNT report. Wearing a seat belt is the best step Kansans can take to prevent death or serious injury in cars.

Seatbelts Are for Everyone (SAFE) is a student-led education program that has been proven to consistently increase seat belt use and reduce fatalities. Its proven results are paired with a great number of student champions who claim the SAFE message has saved their lives. This program, which originated in Southeast Kansas, also improves communication between communities and local law enforcement. Other states, including our neighbors, are working to bring SAFE to their schools.

Currently, SAFE is available in only one-fifth of Kansas' high schools. Senate Bill 274 ensures that the SAFE program is available in every Kansas high school at no cost to the State General Fund.

Kansas Action for Children respectfully requests that committee members act to save lives and prevent injuries by supporting Senate Bill 274.

720 SW Jackson | Suite 201
Topeka, KS 66603

P: 785-232-0550 | F: 785-232-0699
kac@kac.org | www.kac.org

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