

TO: The Honorable Richard Proehl, Chair
House Transportation Committee

FROM: William W. Sneed, Retained Counsel
The State Farm Insurance Companies

SUBJECT: S.B. 274

DATE: March 9, 2016

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee: My name is Bill Sneed and I am Legislative Counsel for the State Farm Insurance Companies ("State Farm"). State Farm is the largest insurer of homes and automobiles in Kansas. State Farm insures one out of every three cars and one out of every four homes in the United States. We appear today in support of S.B. 274.

For decades, State Farm has worked to reduce death and injury on our roads. State Farm has devoted both human and financial resources to help change auto safety behaviors through partnerships to fund research and work alongside like-minded safety groups to help better protect all individuals on the roadways. State Farm insures approximately 18.9% of the auto market in Kansas. We have approximately 250 State Farm agents located all over the state of Kansas and employ approximately 170 persons in this state.

State Farm supports SB 274 and specifically the language encompassed in the bill to create the seat belt safety fund, increasing the fines for adult seat belt violations, and the general support of occupant protection educational programs by allocating a portion of fines collected from seat belt infractions to those programs.

The increase of fines for adult seat belt violations and the general support of occupant protection education programs is in line with State Farm's belief, based upon research studies, that effective safety belt laws include: (1) a minimum fine of at least \$25, although a higher fine is preferred; (2) enforcement on a primary basis permitting a law enforcement officer to stop a vehicle and issue a ticket if the officer sees a violation of the safety belt laws; (3) adequate funding for enforcement and public education on the safety benefits of using belts; and (4) a provision for the limitation of damages for those injured who did not use seat belts.

In particular, State Farm supports allocation of funds to the S.A.F.E. (Seatbelts Are For Everyone) teen safety program. The purpose of S.A.F.E. is to increase seatbelt use and decrease hazardous driving behavior.

100 SE Ninth Street, Suite 250
Topeka, KS 66612
Telephone: 785.233.1446
Fax: 785.233.1939
wsneed@polsinelli.com

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Over the past six years, State Farm has supported the S.A.F.E. program, primarily for its work across the state of Kansas. Because of the program's high level of success, State Farm has also provided recent support for the program's expansion into Oklahoma and its planned expansion into Missouri.

S.A.F.E. began in six schools in Crawford County Kansas. The number of schools in Kansas involved continues to increase each year. During the 2014-2015 school year, an additional nine schools started SAFE programs, bringing the total number of schools involved to 124. An estimated 50,734 Kansas students were reached during the 2014-2015 school year with a monthly traffic safety message and the average seatbelt use increase among participating schools was 4.4%.

The Kansas State Occupant Protection Observational Survey shows that 15-17 year old seatbelt use in Kansas has increased from 61% in 2009 to 84.5% in 2015. This is an increase of 23.5% since the start of the S.A.F.E. program. The number of teen traffic fatalities has also decreased dramatically as have serious injuries.

State Farm strongly supports SB 274. The additional funding generated by increasing fines, and allocating to programs like S.A.F.E, will continue to improve automobile safety for all Kansans.

Thus, my client respectfully requests that at the appropriate time this Committee act favorably and pass out SB. 274. We hope this information has been helpful, and we stand ready to provide any additional information as needed.

Thank you.

Respectfully submitted,



William W. Sneed

WWS:kjb