

Testimony in favor of Senate Bill 82

Chairman Peterson and Members of Senate Transportation Committee:

My name is Elaine Swisher. I appreciate the opportunity to address this committee.

I am an Emergency Nurse of 20 years currently practicing in a busy suburban Emergency Department. I am here representing the Kansas Emergency Nurses Association (KENA), the Kansas State Nurses Association (KSNA) and also as a member of the Safe Kids Kansas Coalition. The more than 1500 members from those organizations would like to add their support to this important piece of legislation, funding the Seatbelts Are For Everyone (SAFE) program. We believe increasing the fine for lack of seatbelt use is also a measure for public health.

Unfortunately, nurses from across the state have seen the devastating injuries and even death that is associated with teens involved in motor vehicle crashes. We believe these injuries could be significantly reduced if there was more education on the importance of wearing seatbelts. We appreciated the enactment of the Graduated Driver License legislation and the resultant decrease in teen deaths. SB 82 is consistent with that injury prevention focus. Perhaps, if wearing a seatbelt becomes a consistent behavior in teenage years, they will continue it as they grow older.

There is Kansas specific evidence to show that the SAFE Program improves seatbelt use through a cooperative effort from the Kansas Traffic Safety Resource Office, law enforcement and high school students themselves. This nationally recognized program has changed the culture in 118 high schools and their communities. By assuring funding on a consistent basis, the program will be able to sustain and expand to more schools.

Care that even the most educated and dedicated nurses give, does not compare to the benefit of a teen not being injured. One of the most difficult tasks we have is seeing serious injury and even death that could have been prevented.

Thank you for opportunity to speak, I would be happy to answer any questions.

Elaine Swisher, RN, MHCL, CEN