



Kansas Sheriffs' Association

PO Box 1122, Pittsburg, KS 66762

Phone: (620) 230-0864 ★ Fax: (620) 230-0866

Sheriff Sandy Horton, Ret., Executive Director

Sheriff John R. Fletcher, Ret., Deputy Director

www.kansassheriffs.org

Testimony to the Senate Transportation Committee Supporting HB2076 – Seat Belts Are For Everyone (SAFE)

March 7, 2017

Chairman Petersen and Committee Members,

In early 2008 Dave Corp with the Kansas Traffic Safety Office met with me regarding the low seatbelt compliance rate for Crawford County. At the time I was Sheriff of Crawford County and surprised to hear we had the lowest compliance rate of 53% overall and only 61% of teen drivers buckling up. This information came from traffic surveys conducted in 20 of the most populated counties in Kansas.

From that conversation and idea was born and after several meetings with School Administrators and students SAFE (Seatbelts Are For Everyone) was created in all six of the Crawford County high schools serving 1,280 students.

Students quickly bought into the program and essentially built SAFE from the ground up including picking out the name. The pledge card used now statewide was actually designed by a Pittsburg High School student. They were soon taught how to take the seatbelt survey from the school parking lot and present safety messages to the student body. SAFE soon expanded to other school districts and continues to grow every year.

In 2012, my last year as Sheriff before retiring and continuing in my position of Executive Director of the Kansas Sheriffs Association, the teen seatbelt compliance rate in Crawford County had increased to 88%. There were 33 rollover accidents that year involving teen drivers and passengers. Of those 33 only 3 were unbuckled with only 1 reportable injury. There were NO FATALITES involving teens in Crawford County since introducing SAFE in 2008 through 2015.

In 2014 The Kansas Sheriffs Association (KSA) adopted SAFE as one of its public safety initiatives. Sheriffs who participated in the SAFE program in their county were offered a \$200 grant to help in funding the program. Forty three Sheriff's participated and KSA provided \$8,600 in funding. For 2015 49 Sheriffs participated and KSA provided \$9,800 in funding.

However, SAFE needs a continuous funding source and expansion Statewide if we are truly going to see a difference in teen safety and that is why the Kansas Sheriffs Association supports this legislative effort.

Respectfully submitted,

Sheriff Sandy Horton, Retired
Executive Director
Kansas Sheriffs Association