



Kansas Bureau of Investigation

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Testimony in Support of House Bill 2448 Before the House Standing Committee on Judiciary

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Chairman Patton and Members of the Committee:

My name is Katie Whisman and I serve as the Executive Officer for the Kansas Bureau of Investigation (KBI). Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of House Bill 2448, which proposes to increase penalties associated with drivers who flee and elude police while driving a stolen motor vehicle. I'd like to share some data from the Kansas Incident Based Reporting System (KIBRS), which is maintained by the KBI, and provide perspective of three areas of concern that are targeted by the statutory changes proposed by HB 2248. These include the increasing trends in motor vehicle theft and drivers of stolen vehicles fleeing and/or attempting to elude pursuing police vehicles, and the number of low property value vehicles being stolen.

Motor vehicle theft continues to rise at an alarming rate in Kansas. Conversely, according to the Federal Bureau of Investigation's *Crime in the United States, 2018* report, this trend has begun to decrease nationally.

According to the *2018 Kansas Crime Index Report*, released by the KBI in July 2019, **motor vehicle theft in Kansas has increased for the fourth year in a row and is currently 20.6% above the 10-year average.** What had been a ten-year downward trend in motor vehicle theft ended in 2016. It was during that same timeframe that burglary offenses began trending downward. In fact, the number of burglaries committed in Kansas during 2017 and 2018 were the lowest in over 15 years, and are currently 22.0% below the 10-year average.

Some criminologists believe motor vehicle theft is replacing burglary as the main crime of opportunity, due in part to a lower probability of getting caught or injured during the commission of the crime. While our state systems do not currently provide us the ability to support these beliefs with data, **another driver of the increase in motor vehicle theft is believed to be related to the use of easily disposable stolen vehicles in the commission of other crimes**, including but not limited to drive by shootings and the transportation and distribution of illegal narcotics.

Another trend of major concern is the increasing frequency with which drivers of stolen vehicles are reportedly leading police on vehicle pursuits. We have heard from our law enforcement partners – particularly those in urban areas – that the frequency of drivers of stolen vehicles refusing to stop for and/or attempting to elude the pursuing police vehicle is on the rise. This presents a threat to the safety of Kansas citizens, including the driver of the stolen vehicle, particularly when such pursuits occur in densely populated urban areas.

While the KBI does not capture data on the number of pursuits involving stolen vehicles, according to KIBRS data, 72.8% of the 8,351 motor vehicle thefts reported to law enforcement during 2018 were reported in Johnson, Sedgwick, Shawnee, and Wyandotte counties.

Along with the increasing occurrence of motor vehicle theft, another point of concern is the number of low property value vehicles that are being stolen. Of the 5,619 motor vehicle thefts reported by law enforcement agencies who submit incident based data to KIBRS, 933 had a property value of \$1,500 or less. For many victims, this vehicle may have been their only means of conveyance, the loss of which may impact their ability to get to and from work. For this reason, HB 2448 proposes to increase penalties for the theft of motor vehicles valued \$1,500 or less.

HB 2448 proposes statutory changes which will help address each of these three areas of concern. Hopefully, these changes will lead to a reduction in the occurrence of motor vehicle theft, and the frequency of drivers who willfully refuse to stop and otherwise attempt to flee and elude pursuing officers. Ultimately, the reduction in crime and risk is an improvement to the safety of Kansas citizens. As an agency whose core mission is to promote public safety and prevent crime in Kansas, the KBI strongly supports the enhancements proposed by HB 2448.

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