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Testimony on House Bill 2481
House Committee on Transportation

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The Kansas Highway Patrol (KHP) appreciates the opportunity to provide written testimony in opposition of House Bill 2481. We respectfully request the Committee consider our agency's concerns. This bill would allow for the use of flashing blue-only lights on police vehicles when used as authorized emergency vehicles. We oppose this bill for the following reasons.

First, allowing blue-only light will reduce motorists' perception of police vehicles during bright lighting conditions. The human eye is sensitive to red light and blue light at different levels of illumination, known as the Purkinje effect. At lower levels of illumination, such as during nighttime hours, red will appear darker and duller relative to other colors. At higher levels of illumination, such as during daylight hours, blue will appear darker and duller relative to other colors. For this reason, we believe a combination of both red and blue lights offers the most visible, and therefore the safest, option in all lighting conditions. As K.S.A. 8-1720(b) currently stands, police vehicles are allowed this combination which provides the benefits of blue lighting in conjunction with the benefits of red lighting.

Second, using a combination of both red and blue lights on police vehicles increases the likelihood of perception by motorists with color vision deficiencies. Those with color blindness are affected in many ways depending upon their specific condition. By allowing police vehicle lights to be illuminated by only a single color, it is effectively reducing the probability of perception should a motorist be limited in their blue light acuity. A police vehicle displaying both red and blue lights increases levels of perception.

Third, Kansas motorists are accustomed to a combination of red and blue lights signifying a police vehicle. We believe if an agency were to use blue-only lights on a police vehicle, the activation of those lights to initiate a traffic stop would likely confuse motorists. This confusion could result in unintended consequences to include erratic driving behavior, the motorist failing to stop altogether, and in rare cases, collisions. Traffic stops are an inherently stressful situation for any driver, and any change in their expectations could be potentially dangerous.

In conclusion, we oppose House Bill 2481 on the grounds that blue-only lights reduce motorists' perception of police vehicles, that blue-only lights may make it more difficult for motorists with color vision deficiencies, and that blue-only lights may confuse Kansas motorists who are not familiar with their use on police vehicles. We sincerely thank members of this committee for their consideration of our testimony.

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