



**Written Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 81  
Senate Committee on Judiciary**

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The Kansas Highway Patrol (KHP) appreciates the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of Senate Bill 81. This bill attempts to address a few key issues when pursuing and prosecuting auto theft incidents.

The requested changes in KSA 8-1568 will add "operating a stolen motor vehicle" as an additional condition to make fleeing and attempts to elude a felony. The reality of auto theft is that it is a gateway for other crimes. Stolen vehicles are often used in burglaries, robberies, and homicides. When the time comes to prosecute suspects in these high-level crimes, the fact that the suspect attempted to escape apprehension by putting the public at risk is often overlooked. The sentence for fleeing and attempting to elude is normally run concurrently with their other crimes, instead of consecutively. Meaning, that the suspect might as well endanger the public and flee because there is not additional penalty even if they are caught and later convicted. The requested changes in the sentencing of 8-1568 to run sentences consecutively will hold those who are found guilty of fleeing and attempting to elude accountable for endangering Kansas citizens.

Senate Bill 81 also attempts to seek justice for the victims of auto theft. Frequently vehicles stolen in the State of Kansas are valued under \$1,500. These vehicles are owned by low income families whose livelihood and welfare may depend on this transportation. All too often stolen vehicles are found wrecked, destroyed by fire, or damaged beyond repair. Low income families are not as likely to have insurance to cover the theft or to have the means to repair the vehicle. Under current statute, those found guilty of stealing a vehicle worth less than \$1,500 are only convicted of a misdemeanor. Those who are losing time at work and left feeling victimized by this crime realize the injustice.

It is the mission of the Kansas Highway Patrol to vigorously apprehend and prosecute, those who utilize Kansas highways for criminal activities. In holding ourselves accountable to this mission our agency alone recovered 405 stolen vehicles in 2018. All too often these cases fall short in successful prosecution, leaving Kansas on the wrong side of national trends. In the last ten years auto theft nationwide has declined but unfortunately Kansas has seen an increase. In 2008 Kansas had 7,136 reported auto thefts. In 2009 this number dropped to 5,782. The number has only increased every year since 2009, and in 2017 we had a ten year high of 8,209 reported auto thefts.

Anyone who pays for insurance on a vehicle feels the negative impacts of rising auto theft whenever they pay their premiums. As the risk of your vehicle being stolen increases, the cost of your insurance premium increases.

In closing the Kansas Highway Patrol is appreciative for being given the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of Senate Bill 81 and ask that you recommend this bill favorably for passage.