



February 9, 2021
House Transportation Committee

Written Testimony in Support of HB 2596

Chairman Proehl and members of the Committee,

I'm writing in support of HB 2596. As you are likely aware, schools and families across Kansas and the nation are experiencing the damaging effects of the school bus driver shortage. HopSkipDrive is currently helping alleviate those in 9 states, and we're hoping to bring our safe transportation solution to Kansas.

However, current Department of Education regulations don't contemplate modern business models like HopSkipDrive's. Certain requirements like 10 training meetings each year and biennial physical exams are not applicable to transportation network company (TNC) services - like HopSkipDrive's - that is provided in personal sedans, SUVs, and minivans. HB 2596 recognizes the extensive statutory requirements already in place for TNC services, removes inapplicable requirements while also including a fingerprint background check requirement, and provides districts autonomy and flexibility in contracting with modern and proven-safe solutions like HopSkipDrive.

HopSkipDrive is a TNC designed specifically with the interests of youth riders in mind. We are proud to have safely arranged rides over 20 million miles, for over 1.4 million kids, to and from 13,000 schools across the country. Our technology, innovation, and approach to safety set us apart from other competitors in the rideshare and student transportation industry. Seven years ago, I set out alongside my two female co-founders to design a system based on the premise: "What would it take for me to put my own child in a HopSkipDrive?"

Since that time, we've learned a thing or two about safety and have made significant advancements in the student transportation space. By looking at the data to understand what actually impacts safety, we can ensure that more qualified drivers can get on the road and stay on the road in order to serve the critical needs of students with special disabilities, youth in the foster care system, and youth experiencing homelessness. We know that our 15-Point Certification Process for drivers, live ride monitoring, and telematics work because our data proves it. We publish our safety statistics annually and are proud to share that all of our reports include a 0% critical safety incident rate. These innovative methods work to ensure safety while also ensuring that school districts can get access to safe, flexible, and customizable transportation for their students when they need it - which is now.

What we've learned throughout our 7 years of operations and expansion into 9 states is that many state boards of education regulations over small vehicles don't contemplate modern business models like HopSkipDrive's. HB 2596 recognizes the extensive regulations already in place for TNC services and would remove inapplicable requirements, such as 10 annual safety meetings and biennial physical exams, which are not applicable to a vetted driver using their personal vehicle. This way, school districts can have greater access to modern transportation services for students and broader flexibility to set the standards they want to see of their contracted service providers, without sacrificing safety.

Through HB 2596, Kansas has the opportunity to significantly improve access to transportation services for students by recognizing existing statutory structures that apply to this type of transportation, recognizing innovations in technology that have led to safer outcomes, and by providing districts autonomy and flexibility in contracting with proven-safe solutions like HopSkipDrive. HopSkipDrive serves as a model for how to improve both access and safety, and remains ready to bring our safe solution to Kansas families and schools

Thank you for your work and dedication to this matter.

Sincerely,

Trish Donahue
Vice President of Legal & Policy