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Sen. Kellie Warren, Chair
Senate Committee on Judiciary
Kansas Capitol Building, Room 582-N
300 West 10th Street
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Re: Senate Bill 500
Written Testimony in Support

Members of the Committee:

I write as a part-time Municipal Judge and full-time Municipal Court Administrator, in support of Senate Bill 500, which you currently have before you for hearing.

By way of introduction, I have served as Municipal Court Administrator in Newton and Municipal Judge in Goessel for 20 years and 12 years, respectively. I currently serve on the executive boards for both statewide professional organizations. The breadth of experience in those combined capacities has given me substantial exposure to the issue of suspended drivers licenses. The proposed changes in SB 500 will be very positive.

Courts struggle to adequately address the problem of citizens with suspended licenses. While sanctioning drivers who ignore their court obligations can be a powerful tool, it also creates self-perpetuating problems that escalate into insurmountable hurdles for citizens, even while they make full-faith efforts to clear up their obligations. This bill empowers citizens by expanding opportunities for restricted licenses which allow them to drive to and from gainful employment. It also allows parents to legally drive when needed for their parenting responsibilities. All too often, we see people decide to take chances by driving with a suspended license to tend to the necessities of life, such as work and children. So long as people are working with the courts to satisfy their obligations, there is no need to bar people from these necessities.

This issue is also at the top of the judicial trends nationally. States across the nation have been reconsidering the disproportional impact of liberally suspending licenses. Inevitably, citizens who have money to pay their tickets do so immediately, while those struggling to pay the increasing costs of rent and groceries make difficult decisions and are the ones who end up with suspended licenses. This spirals into further issues and creates more of the problems we wish to solve. This bill will improve the ability of the poorer populations to take care of their basic needs.

Thank you very much for your consideration of this bill, which I urge you to pass.

Very truly yours,



Greg Nickel