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Testimony in Opposition to SB 445, Drop Box Ban
Senate Federal & State Affairs Committee, Sen. Rob Olson, chair
February 15, 2022

Mr. Chair, Ranking Member Faust-Goudeau, Members of the Committee:

My name is Rabbi Moti Rieber; I am executive director of Kansas Interfaith Action, a statewide, multi-faith issue-advocacy organization that “puts faith into action” by educating, engaging and advocating on behalf of people of faith and the public regarding critical racial, economic and climate justice issues. We are the advocacy partner of several of the mainline denominations in Kansas, including the ELCA Lutheran Church; the Kansas-Oklahoma Conference of the UCC; the Episcopal Diocese of Kansas; and the Mercy & Justice Team of the Great Plains Conference of the UMC, as well as of Jewish and Muslim individuals and faith communities. I write in opposition to SB 445.

KIFA has for many years worked in coalitions dedicated to expanding access to the right to vote in Kansas. In these matters our guiding principle has been that ***everyone who is eligible to vote in Kansas should be allowed and encouraged to vote***, that there should be no unnecessary legal or bureaucratic impediments to either registration or voting. This bill would move us significantly in the opposite direction.

By all accounts, the 2020 election in Kansas was a rousing success. Despite the pandemic, record numbers of people voted, both in the primary and in the general election. The mail-in, drop-off and in-person voting mechanisms all worked exactly the way they were intended to. Of course, we are aware of a lot of rumors and claims about the 2020 election, particularly on the presidential level, but it is clear that there were no irregularities in the electoral process in Kansas, including in the use of drop boxes.

Ballot drop boxes have been used for many years across Kansas without controversy as a convenient way for voters to drop off their ballots without relying on the mail. In the pandemic election of 2020, when people were reluctant to vote in person and the United States Postal Service was perceived as unreliable, thousands more people used drop boxes to cast their ballots. My family and I used the drop box outside the Central Branch of the Johnson County library. It was convenient, and as the secretary of state has testified, it was secure. Given this testimony, it is clear that there is literally no problem for this legislation to address.

SB 445 would require that drop boxes for election ballots be secured inside a building, either the county election office or a voting location. This would restrict voting to the hours when such a facility would be open, which varies from county to county. It would have made it impossible for my family to use this convenient means of casting our ballot, and it would similarly eliminate this mode of voting for

thousands of people work or go to school during voting hours, or who are caregivers, or who are in vocational or rehabilitation programs, or who live in counties where voting hours or locations are restricted. It would deprive thousands of Kansas of their ability, and therefore of their right, to cast their ballot.

Members of the committee, Kansas does not have a problem with ballot drop boxes. They are safe, secure, and convenient. They allow more people to use their franchise. This bill would make it harder for people to vote, exactly the opposite of what our policy should be. It's unnecessary and it's wrong. Please vote against SB 445.