

January 26, 2023

## Testimony to the House Committee on Elections

NAME: **Leslie D. Mark**

TITLE: **Kansas Citizen / Voter**

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BILL NUMBER: **HB2057, *Regulating the use of remote ballot boxes for the return of advance voting ballots***

PROPONENT, OPPONENT, or NEUTRAL: **Opponent**

ORAL or WRITTEN ONLY TESTIMONY: **Written Only**

Dear Chair Proctor & Members of the Committee,

I write today voicing my opposition to bill HB 2057, regulating the use of remote ballot boxes for the return of advance voting ballots.

In March of 2022, as Covid-19 spread wildly through our communities, volunteer voter registration and civics groups honed Zoom skills to brainstorm how best to recalibrate high school / new voter registrations and civic outreach. Preparation for August and November election challenges became quickly apparent. The first call was made to then Johnson County, Kansas Election Commissioner Connie Schmidt, known to be an invaluable resource and guide.

Indeed, Ms. Schmidt is a nationally recognized expert in election administration. She served as Johnson County, Kansas Election Commissioner from 1995 – 2004 and was reappointed to steer Johnson County through the presidential election cycle in February 2020 – January 2021, after which her “excellent service to the Election Office in the Presidential 2020 election cycle” was nationally recognized. Members of Johnson County and Kansas civics groups maintained regular conversations with Commissioner Schmidt to offer volunteer support in recruiting poll workers, educational outreach to community partners, and consider ideas to create the safest voting processes in the pandemic. Ms. Schmidt immediately honed in on the importance / safety benefits for adding drop-boxes so voters could safely return their advanced ballots. She also immediately flagged potential security concerns and met early and often with JoCo Sheriff, various cities’ police personnel, and JoCoLibrary (which had existing cameras to monitor boxes 24/7).

The thoroughness, thoughtfulness and systematic approach to EXPANDING safe and secure voting in Johnson County in 2020 is an exemplary model for not only the rest of the state but the entire country. There is no doubt that the electorate and the candidates who ran for office that year were served well and had their voices heard and their votes fully counted. Limiting rather than expanding access to voting is not a democratic value. We can do and have done better. Let’s not go backwards.

Leslie D. Mark

Mission Hills, HD 25 / Sen 7