

To the Kansas House Elections Committee,

My name is Sarah Streyder. I am the spouse of an active-duty service member, currently stationed overseas. I am also the Executive Director of Secure Families Initiative, a nonpartisan nonprofit that helps military partners, parents, kids, and other loved ones be voters and civic participants in their communities.

I am here to testify in support of HB2018. It's a commonsense solution that opens up a pathway for military families stationed in Kansas to volunteer as poll workers.

When you're an active-duty service family, the military typically moves you to different duty stations every 2-4 years. *Some of our members have moved as many as 3 times in 3 years!* As a result, many of us decide to maintain one steady legal residence "back home" throughout all those moves, rather than re-establish residency in each new temporary location. For example, my family was stationed next door in Nebraska from 2016-19, but my husband and I still voted and paid state taxes back in Washington State, where we originally enlisted from. Federal law protects these rights for both service members and their spouses.

As the leader of a national organization, I hear from military families stationed all across our country about the various barriers they face when trying to engage in their local community. And every election year, I hear the same wave of sadness from many families: they hear about poll worker shortages and dearly want to step in and help, but if they're an out-of-state voter, they're ineligible to do so.

HB2018 would be a welcome relief to military families in Kansas. So many of us are civically-minded folks who want to give back to the communities that have welcomed us in from far away. And local civic engagement is healthy for military families – according to the Blue Star Families annual survey, the more strongly a military family feels belonging in their local community, the better their wellbeing and the more likely they are to remain in the military.

This bill would provide an additional channel for families to participate in the very democracy our service protects.

If HB2018 were to pass into law, Kansas would become the first state to create this pathway to poll working for military families like mine. I hope you vote to advance this bill, so that Kansas can get one step closer to creating a model that other states with nonpartisan poll worker processes can follow.

Sincerely,

Sarah Streyder
Executive Director
Secure Families Initiative