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February 22, 2021

Honorable Kansas State Representative Blake Carpenter
Chair, House, Elections Committee and Distinguished Members of the Committee

Re: House Bill 2355, clarifying four election statutes – Proponent

Chairman Carpenter and Distinguished Committee Members,

My name is Rick Piepho, Harvey County Clerk and Chairman of the Elections and Legislative Committees of the Kansas County Clerks and Elections Officials Association (KCCEOA). The KCCEOA is a statewide organization with 109 members. Our membership includes publicly elected county clerks, charter appointed county clerks, and additionally, four election officers from the most populous counties in Kansas. The duties of the County Clerk are significant under statute. One of our most public facing functions is free and fair administration of elections. We take this duty very seriously. We prepare for every possible, and impossible, scenario which could occur. Our organization has a legislative platform adopted by the membership. I am submitting this letter supporting HB 2355 on behalf of the KCCEOA membership.

We believe the proposed changes to bond law (KSA 10-120) in Section 1 are critical. Many special elections, including many petition initiated elections, require utilizing this schedule which is nearly impossible to implement. Federal law requires that ballots are sent 45 days prior to an election to all Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA) voters with applications on file. To comply with federal law and the current provisions of this statute the special election must be scheduled for the 45th day from entity notification or petition verification and ballots must be prepared and sent to UOCAVA voters on the day the election is called. The proposed change would allow a 15 day period for scheduling the election and for preparing and sending the ballots to the UOCAVA voters in the jurisdiction.

The KCCEOA supports removal of the two year prior residency requirement for election commissioner selection. We believe this requirement limits potential applicants, especially those with election administration experience. We also support correcting the inconsistency between the 100,000 population in KSA 19-3422 and the 130,000 figure in KSA 19-3419.

The KCCEOA supports the proposed changes in Section 4 to make the return deadlines and signature verification for mail ballot elections consistent with advance by mail ballots for other elections.

Thank You for considering our testimony as a proponent of HB 2355.

Sincerely,

Rick Piepho
Harvey County Clerk & Election Officer – KCCEOA Elections Committee Chair