

STATE OF KANSAS  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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LEAH HOWELL  
81ST DISTRICT

To: Chair Barker, Fed and State Committee  
Re: **Proponent Testimony for HB2715**  
From: Leah Howell, Ks. State Representative, District 81

Date: March 1, 2022

Chair Barker and members of the committee:

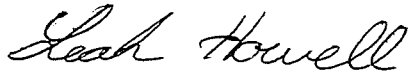
As you all are aware the topic of election security continues to be of considerable concern to voters in Kansas. The accountability of having excellent election laws lies squarely on the shoulders of the legislature. While this responsibility has been and continues to be taken seriously by all of you, especially in recent years, I believe it would be fair to say that this topic is an ongoing image problem for our state. The legislature should continue to work to improve our election laws as needed providing confidence in election security and integrity with the public.

HB2715 ensures that no matter who serves as the Secretary of State, the legislature has provided clear law for formalized county election official training and certification in our state. The first intent of HB2715 is to create a state level formal and comprehensive training for both County Clerks and the Election Commissioners. In speaking with the SOS office about this bill I was excited to learn that the SOS was partially moving towards this goal. In speaking with several County clerks and Election Commissioners over the years, I came to understand that while the County Clerks receive some election training as a part of their County Clerk training after winning their elections, however, the Election Commissioners do not take County clerk training and don't really have a formal training course for them to take and follow. They depend on more of an unofficial "mentorship" from other election commissioners and county clerks along with reaching out to the SOS office for help with specific questions. With the complexity of elections laws and the many different types of elections, presidential, statewide races, all the way down to townships, and petitions to name some for an example, the vast number of laws and policies to follow and even set up for your own county can be quite challenging.

The second goal of HB2715 is to support our county election officials and give them the right tools to be successful as soon as possible after being elected or appointed. This bill strikes the right balance in providing input from both the Kansas County Clerks and Election Commissioners Association and the Secretary of State's office, requires this new certification course to be implemented before the Presidential elections of 2024, and keeps the training manageable by requiring this training be done in conjunction with other training programs. Implementing this course, in conjunction with other training will keep the time investment and fiscal expense to a reasonable minimum for both our elected officials and counties.

Thirdly, this bill creates a certification and recertification process for our election officials, building confidence with both the public and media about the expertise that our valuable election officials provide to all of us in our great state. Again, by providing a path for the SOS office and the KCCEOA to both have a voice in creating and maintaining this course of certification helps keep this practical and meaningful for all parties involved. I encourage the members of this committee to support HB2715 and pass it out favorably.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Leah Howell".

Leah Howell  
Kansas State Representative, District 81