

February 7, 2017

Honorable Senator Elaine Bowers, Chair, and Members of the Senate Ethics, Elections, and Local Government Committee

Chairwoman Bowers,

As a Kansan, a U.S. citizen, a registered voter, and—most importantly—a mother, I strongly oppose SB57. I am concerned that this legislation would disenfranchise thousands of Kansans who would have difficulty navigating the documentation requirements already found to be unconstitutionally stringent. In my understanding, this policy would seek to circumvent court rulings by setting up an unnecessarily complex two-tiered registration system. I worry that such a measure might discourage voting in state and local elections, thereby distancing people from the process that elects those who make the policies that affect our lives every day.

As my children grow up, I consider one of my most sacred duties to be the job of helping them assume their responsibilities as engaged, informed citizens of this great nation. I find it tragic, then, that the formative years of their exposure to our civic processes are shaped by unfounded allegations of non-citizen voting, misguided efforts to confuse people as to the real threats to our democracy, and unconstitutional throwbacks to policies that predated the expansion of essential voting rights.

Kansans want elections where every citizen has an equal right to have his or her voice heard. Secretary Kobach's attempts at previous policy have failed this test, and the courts have rightly limited his powers. SB57 is a barely-veiled attempt to seize back the authority to exert his narrow vision of what democracy should look like. It contradicts our state's historic commitment to liberty—the values I want my children to be surrounded with as they rapidly approach voting age. I ask you to please oppose SB57.

Sincerely,

Melinda Lewis

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