February 14, 2020

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

Re: Senate Bill 351, relating to counting provisional ballots

Chairman Bowers and Distinguished Committee Members,

I am the Harvey County Clerk and Election Officer and chair of the elections committee of the Kansas County Clerks and Election Officials Association (KCCEOA). I am submitting this letter supporting SB 351 on behalf of the KCCEOA membership. I thank you for your time in considering our opinions.

The KCCEOA prepared a legislative agenda which was developed through a policy committee process and agreed to by a majority of the members. One of the items specifically included is: "Advocating for measures that allow provisional ballots to be counted". We believe that this bill adequately addresses our concerns regarding allowing more of the ballots cast provisionally to be counted.

Data from the EAC indicates that most of the rejected provisional ballots are due to a registration issue, either registered in another jurisdiction within Kansas or not registered. Currently provisional ballots cast by voters who move to another address within a county are counted, but if a voter moves across county lines their provisional ballot is not counted. These voters have made the effort to vote, but their ballot is not allowed to be counted.

This legislation would have little effect on the administrative burden and costs for election officials to conduct an election. Each individual provisional ballot is already processed to categorize by outcome, but there would be a slight increase in cost to open and count more ballots.

The KCCEOA supports this bill.

Sincerely,

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