

Testimony on House Bill 2477

Federal and State Affairs Committee

Presented by

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Good morning Chairman Barker and members of the Federal and State Affairs Committee. My name is McKenzie Szopinski. I am a senior at Seaman High School. I am thankful for the opportunity to present the HB2477 to Committee.

There is no greater threat to a representative democracy than its people not exercising their voice. There is one word that defines America: Freedom. We are free because our system of government has been designed to work for the people. In order for our freedoms to be protected, as the founders intended, the public must set forth the representatives that they believe will fight for the public good and the needs of their constituents. Some of those representatives are sitting before me today, here on behalf of the people. Yet, the people are not voting. Historically, voter turnout and participation has been in a decline. It is an issue that affects every state in this country, even Kansas. In the general election of 2018, only 51% of eligible voters cast a ballot, ranking us 27th of the 50 states. Average is not good enough, as we are not merely an average state, and we should strive for our numbers to represent that. There is no single reason for people choosing not to vote, nor is there a single boundary that needs to be brought down. There will be multiple steps needed in order to find a solution that fixes the problem at hand. One of those steps is improving the convenience and access our citizens in Kansas have to vote, because voting in and of itself should not be what causes political disengagement. Our bill designating

election day a state holiday will accomplish this and is a viable first step in improving voter turnout, and at the very least, will not harm voter turnout. Our right and freedom of voting, an action that defines our American identity, is worth celebrating.