My name is Peggy Byers. I am the Deputy Director for the Washington County Board of Elections. We are a county of 42000 registered voters who could very much benefit from a change that would allow us to treat early in-person voters like those voters who walk in to a precinct on Election Day. We are an optical scan county so our voters walk in to our counter and we immediately print out an in-person absentee application for each person and ask them to fill out an absentee envelope. These pieces ask for their name, address, birth date, the date for the election they want to vote in, and a form of identification. Finally, they must sign each of these pieces. Each of these pieces is an opportunity for the voter to make an error. These pieces of information are on the voter screen in front of the employee and could easily be quickly checked. The voter then fills all these same pieces of information again on an envelope. After they vote, these voters must stuff their ballot in to their identification envelope and then place that envelope in to a secured box in our office which is stored in a double-locked area. We can begin to open those envelopes 19 days before the election now which has helped our staff out tremendously, but we often are asked by the voters why they are writing down all of their personal info, and how is their vote private when they have to put the ballot in to an envelope that has their name on it. We explain how we handle those envelopes to keep the info private, but there is always the sense that the voter just wants to handle their own ballot in a more private manner.

For those who walk in to a precinct on Election Day, the voter says their name and address, shows a form of identification, signs on the electronic pad for comparison of the signature, and is then given a ballot. The voter proceeds to a table or booth, votes the ballot, and puts the ballot through the tabulator. No poll worker ever has to touch the ballot or see how that person voted.

The idea of treating an early in-person voter like the Election Day voter has been around for a while. Our software vendors are ready and prepared to treat our early in-person voters like an Election Day voter. The voters would appreciate not having to fill out all the paperwork and would love to put the ballot through the tabulator for themselves so they would have true second-chance voting, rather than having to put their ballot in a box that later requires staff to open and put through the tabulator for them. Our staff would appreciate being able to handle the voter more quickly, thereby eliminating some lines, and not having to open all those envelopes and placing all the votes through the tabulator at a time in the cycle when we are extremely busy with other matters related to the election. This measure would save taxpayer dollars because we would not need all the paperwork now required. Allowing early in-person voters to be treated like Election Day voters is a good idea for everyone. Please consider the necessary changes to allow this to take place in our offices.