

February 8, 2024

House Committee on Elections  
State Capitol  
300 SW 10<sup>th</sup> Street  
Topeka, KS 66612

**Re: Health Forward Foundation opposition to House Bill 2571 – Requiring that advance voting ballots dropped in a remote ballot box be designated as provisional until verified by county election officials.**

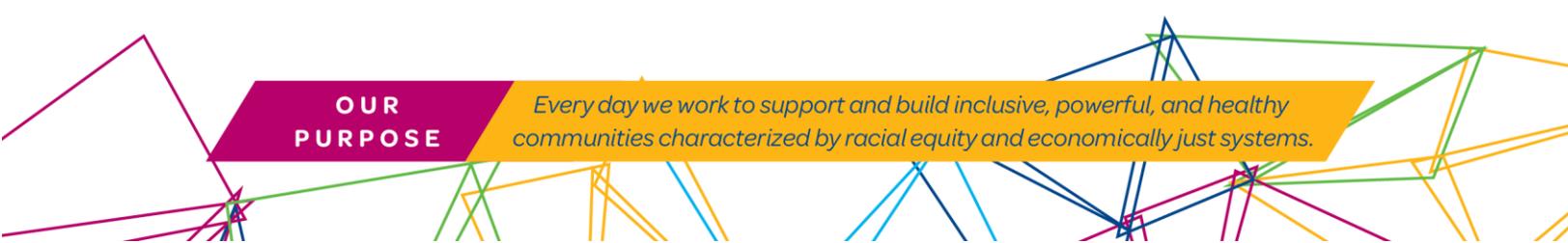
Chair Proctor and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of Health Forward Foundation (Health Forward), I submit this letter of testimony in opposition to House Bill 2571. Health Forward works to support and build inclusive, powerful, and healthy communities characterized by racial equity and economically just systems. We oppose this legislation as it would significantly and adversely impact people's voting rights and the administration of elections. Voting rights are an important social driver of health, as determined by the American Medical Association because voting allows people to elect to office representatives that represent their health and other interests. According to the Health and Democracy Index, the more inclusive and expansive voting access is, the better the health outcomes are for a state.

According to the National Association of Counties, any changes to elections law without supporting resources can harm the elections process at the county level. The fiscal note accompanying this bill attests to the fact that there are no additional resources to implement this bill, which means it would come at a direct cost to counties for additional staff. The other choice counties would have is to get rid of drop boxes altogether, which would add barriers to voters, especially in rural areas.

HB 2571 would relegate legally cast ballots to secondary status and subject them to an unclear and burdensome verification process where mistakes will likely be made. These mistakes will be challenged in court and this bill would be deemed unconstitutional. A similar case in Pennsylvania was heard last year and mail-in ballots cast by three senior-aged voters were rejected due to error. The court required that the provisional ballots they had to recast must be counted, according to the Public Interest Law Center. Deeming ballots provisional at the outset with no cause is an infringement on the constitutional right to cast a legal ballot.

Health Forward asks legislators on this committee to vote no on HB 2571. Not only does it create an undue burden on counties with no corresponding resources to implement these changes, but it will create confusion and increase the likelihood of mistakes on verification. Ultimately, this bill would be challenged in court and cost taxpayer dollars and could potentially erode voters' trust that their legally cast ballot will be counted come election time.



**OUR  
PURPOSE**

*Every day we work to support and build inclusive, powerful, and healthy communities characterized by racial equity and economically just systems.*

We encourage the legislature to support ways to increase voter turnout and civic engagement in Kansas to empower citizens to participate more freely in the democratic process. Please feel free to contact me at [nmadden@healthforward.org](mailto:nmadden@healthforward.org)

Respectfully,

Nathan J. Madden, Ph.D.  
Impact Strategist - Policy  
Health Forward Foundation

