

January 24, 2024

Senate Committee on Federal and State Affairs
State Capitol
300 SW 10th Street
Topeka, KS 66612

Re: Health Forward Foundation opposition to Senate Bill 366 – prohibiting mail in ballots to be sent until an application has been completed by voter.

Chair Thompson and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of Health Forward Foundation (Health Forward), I submit this letter in opposition to Senate Bill 366. Health Forward works to support and build inclusive, powerful, and healthy communities characterized by racial equity and economically just systems. We oppose this bill as it creates an unnecessary obstacle for voters to access advance mail in ballots. Furthermore, it may significantly and adversely impact the administration of elections at the local level, as changes to elections law without supporting resources can harm the elections process at the county level.

SB 366 will limit access to advance mail in ballots for many voters, including those in rural areas, with disabilities, and who are aging in place. A standardized application for a ballot is necessary to ensure applications are simple, clear, and understandable. This places an intense burden on county election officials without any supporting resources, something the National Association of Counties stresses is unworkable for healthy, safe, and fair elections. Furthermore, the Bipartisan Policy Center shows that mail in ballots have been proven safe from fraud and are ever more popular with voters.

Voting rights are an important social driver of health, as determined by the American Medical Association as voting allows people to elect to office individuals 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.

Health Forward asks legislators on this committee to vote no on SB 366 due to its lack of specificity and creation of unnecessary hurdles for voters to exercise their rights. Absent some direction, the bill is susceptible to abuse and could result in an infringement on voting rights.

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

Respectfully,

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

**OUR
PURPOSE**

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