



EQUALITY ♦ LAW ♦ JUSTICE

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Opponent for HB 2493 - Verbal Testimony
House Elections Committee

Chairman Proctor and members of the committee:

My name is Mike Burgess. I am the Director of Policy & Outreach at the Disability Rights Center of Kansas (DRC). DRC is a public interest legal advocacy organization that is part of a national network of federally mandated organizations empowered to advocate for Kansans with disabilities. DRC is officially designated by the State of Kansas as Kansas' protection and advocacy system. DRC is a private, 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation, organizationally independent of state government and whose focus is the protection and enhancement of the rights of Kansans with disabilities.

I am here today to share our opposition for HB 2493. This bill proposes to require individuals who assist to be a qualified elector and to provide their driver's license number or non-driver identification card number.

While I think I understand the intent of this bill, it absolutely creates an unnecessary burden that will negatively impact many voters with disabilities and the people who assist them.

Eliminates anyone younger than 18, who is not a registered voter (AKA qualified elector)

While we allow individuals who are 16 and over to serve on an election board, we will no longer allow them to assist a voter as the bill requires someone to be a qualified elector to even be able to assist another voter.

Further challenges the relationships of people with disabilities

People with disabilities have to get really good at asking for help, even when their disability may make that difficult. They may need help running to the grocery store, getting their mail, or even having things mailed for them. When asking for help, they have to weigh how much they inconvenience their nice neighbors and friends as most people are only willing to do so much for them.

Today, when someone asks a friend to help them, they have to sign an affidavit that threatens them with a Level 9 nonperson felony. While that is bad enough, now it is like writing a check to your county treasurer (no offense to my friends that are county treasurers.). "May I please see your ID, so I can write your driver's license identification number on my ballot envelope."

Increased Risk of identity theft

The provisions in this bill not only makes it more difficult for Kansans with disabilities to ask for help, it also poses an increased risk to the person helping them since their ID number will be printed on the outside of the envelope.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our opposition to HB 2493. I would be happy to stand for questions at the appropriate time.