

Chair Proctor and Members of the House Elections Committee,

My name is Ashley Hernandez, and I am writing on behalf of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth's Office of Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation, to testify in **opposition to HB 2453**. This bill does not improve election integrity in Kansas and would instead impose harmful and unnecessary barriers to voter access.

Kansas elections are already secure and well administered. According to the Kansas Secretary of State, Kansas uses multiple safeguards in every election, including voter registration verification, signature verification for advance ballots, provisional ballots, and post-election audits.[1] Despite repeated scrutiny, there has been **no evidence of widespread or systemic voter fraud in Kansas elections**. State officials and post-election reporting following the 2024 general election confirmed that elections were conducted smoothly and securely, even with record participation.[2]

In the 2024 general election, **more than 1.3 million Kansans cast ballots**, representing approximately 64 percent of registered voters.[2] This high level of participation **occurred under Kansas's existing election laws**, which allow no-excuse advance voting and provide voters with flexible opportunities to cast a ballot. The success of recent elections demonstrates that **Kansas's current system works** and does not require restrictive changes to maintain integrity.

HB 2453 would move voter registration and advance ballot application deadlines earlier and shorten the in-person advance voting period by ending voting at noon on the Sunday before Election Day. These changes do not address a documented security problem. Instead, they **reduce flexibility for eligible voters** who face real-world constraints, including unpredictable work schedules, caregiving responsibilities, limited transportation, or reliance on mail service, particularly in rural areas.

Advance voting is a significant and widely used method of participation in Kansas. In recent elections, hundreds of thousands of Kansans voted early, either by mail or in person.[3] Research consistently shows that **advance and early voting options increase participation without increasing fraud**, while **shortened voting windows reduce turnout** among working-class voters, seniors, and voters with limited access to transportation.[4]

The bill also expands identification and signature verification requirements for advance ballots. While **verification is already part of Kansas election procedures**, expanding reliance on signature matching increases the risk of ballot rejection for reasons unrelated to fraud. National data show that **mail ballot rejection rates are low, around 1 to 1.2 percent, but that the most common reason for rejection is signature mismatch, not evidence of illegal voting**.[5] Studies further show that older voters, voters with disabilities, and first-time voters are more

likely to have ballots rejected due to signature issues.[6] A ballot rejected for a technical discrepancy does not improve election integrity; it disenfranchises an eligible voter.

Nonpartisan research institutions, including the Brennan Center for Justice and the Brookings Institution, have consistently found that voter fraud, particularly **fraud associated with mail or advance voting, is exceedingly rare and that restrictive voting laws do not meaningfully reduce fraud.**[4][7] Instead, such laws increase administrative complexity and shift the burden onto voters, often resulting in lower participation and reduced public trust.

Strong elections are those in which eligible voters can cast a ballot and have that ballot counted. Kansas already meets that standard. **HB 2453 would move the state away from that goal by restricting access without evidence of necessity or benefit.**

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to oppose House Bill 2453 and to continue supporting election policies that are evidence-based, accessible, and protective of every Kansan's fundamental right to vote.

Thank you,

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Footnotes

1. Kansas Secretary of State, *Election Statistics and Administration Resources*, <https://sos.ks.gov/elections/election-statistics-data.html>
2. Kansas Reflector, "Kansas sees high voter turnout, smooth elections in 2024," Nov. 2024, <https://kansasreflector.com/2024/11/06/kansas-sees-high-voter-turnout-smooth-elections-two-tight-legislative-races/>
3. State Affairs Kansas, "Kansas 2024 election sees record voter turnout," <https://pro.stateaffairs.com/ks/elections/kansas-2024-election-record-voter-turnout>
4. Brennan Center for Justice, *Mail Voting: What Has Changed and What Has Not*, <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/mail-voting-accuracy>
5. Ballotpedia News, "Nationwide mail ballot rejection rate was about 1.2% in 2024," <https://news.ballotpedia.org>
6. Palmer, Slaughter, & Porter, *Ballot Rejection and Disenfranchisement*, peer-reviewed research, https://maxwellpalmer.com/docs/articles/Palmer_Slaughter_Ballot_Rejections.pdf
7. Brookings Institution, "Mail voting in the U.S.: Data points to very low fraud," <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/mail-voting-in-the-us-data-points-to-very-low-fraud-and-significant-benefits-to-voters/>