

January 22, 2025

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

**Re: Health Forward Foundation opposition to Senate Bill 4 - requiring all advance voting ballots to be returned by 7pm on election day.**

Chair Thompson and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of Health Forward Foundation (Health Forward), I submit this letter of testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 4. 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 will negatively impact people's livelihoods and wellbeing. Voting rights are an important social driver of health, as determined by the American Medical Association, and this bill requiring all advance voting ballots to be returned by 7pm on election day, cuts directly against that. According to the Health and Democracy Index, the more inclusive and expansive voting access is, the better the health outcomes are for a state.

Barriers to voting access should be reduced not amplified. According to the Kansas Secretary of State, almost one-third of eligible voters chose not to exercise their power to vote in 2024. This legislation would make it harder for people to vote in advance by mail and would invalidate Constitutionally protected votes. In the same election, over 150,000 Kansans sent in advance ballots by mail. Advance mail in balloting should be protected, as it accounts for more than one in ten votes cast.

SB 4 creates unnecessary barriers that will most assuredly lead to hard-working people in rural communities in Kansas not having their votes counted because of the distance to travel to drop off a ballot. It would harm those with obligations to childcare, care for a sick or elderly adult, or work by giving them less options to vote as their schedule demands. Additionally, this type of harmful legislation would affect Kansans of color most adversely, according to a Brennan Center for Justice study.

Health Forward asks legislators on this committee to vote no on SB 4. We would instead 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 [jwilliams@healthforward.org](mailto:jwilliams@healthforward.org)

Respectfully,

Jason Williams, Principal Impact Strategist - Power.  
Health Forward Foundation