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Written-Only *Opponent* Testimony Regarding Senate Bill 4

Kristy Baughman, Executive Director of United Community Services of Johnson County

Date: January 21, 2025

Kristy Baughman, Executive Director

United Community Services of Johnson County, Inc.

9001 W. 110th St., Ste 100

Overland Park, KS 66210

Chair Thompson and Members of the Committee of Federal and State Affairs:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide **opponent testimony regarding Senate Bill 4**, a bill that would require the return of advance voting ballots by 7:00 p.m. on the day of the election.

United Community Services of Johnson County (UCS) is a nonprofit agency that provides data analysis, leads collaborative planning, and mobilizes resources to enhance the availability and delivery of health and human services in Johnson County and the surrounding region. UCS is committed to supporting policies, programs, and services that are invested in the success of our community's most vital resource – its people.

The American Medical Association has found that [voting rights and access](#) are an important component of health; specifically, voting is part of a feedback loop connecting residents with legislators. As a result, where voting engagement is high, health is better as lawmakers can hear the voice of residents and respond. Conversely, where voting engagement is low, poor health is more common and can result in even lower voting engagement and continuing poor health outcomes. Decreasing barriers to voting supports active participation in voting and better health of the community. Proposed Senate Bill 4 pushes Kansas in the wrong direction: increasing barriers to voting and good health, instead of decreasing them.

Keeping the three-day grace period for mail-in ballots ensures that voters who followed the rules can trust the election system to count their votes. In Kansas, we are already throwing some ballots away: in the August primary, [nearly 1,000 ballots were thrown out](#) due to delays or missing postmarks, despite being mailed on time. Secretary of State Scott Schwab has expressed concern that these ballots were not received on time and able to be counted. Creating new barriers to voting will adversely affect the health of Kansans. Senate Bill 4 presents additional challenges for the legislature to hear the voices of hardworking Kansans, such as those in rural areas located far from ballot drop boxes, caretakers, and Kansans with mobility and health challenges.

As part of UCS's 2025 public policy platform, we are committed to supporting the health of all Kansans, including through access and participation in the voting process. **Therefore, we oppose Senate Bill 4, which would create additional barriers to accepting legitimate mail-in ballots in Kansas.**