

January 31, 2023

House Committee on Elections
State Capitol
300 SW 10th Street
Topeka, KS 66612

Re: Health Forward Foundation opposition to House Bill 2057 – regulating the use of remote ballot boxes for the return of such ballots.

Chair Proctor and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of Health Forward Foundation (Health Forward), I submit this letter of testimony in opposition to House Bill 2057. Health Forward works to support and build inclusive, powerful and health communities characterized by racial equity and economically just systems. We oppose this legislation as it will negatively impact people's access to participating in the democratic process. Voting rights are a social driver of health, as recently determined by the American Medical Association, and this bill limits access to remote ballot boxes. 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. Research has shown that ballot drop boxes are a proven way to increase voter turnout because it is safe, secure, and often preferable to sending via the postal service according to a study at the University of Washington. We should increase the number of ballot drop boxes as it ultimately increases people's likelihood to vote. As we've seen with similar legislation in other states, these bills have the most harmful impact on voters of color. Georgia passed a similar law after the 2020 elections and Fulton County, with a higher proportion of Black and Hispanic voters, went from 37 drop boxes in 2020 to just seven in 2022, according to the Pew Trusts.

HB 2057 would also create unnecessary barriers for hard-working people in rural communities because of increased distance to travel to drop off a ballot. Additionally, the Pew Trusts also show that this type of legislation harms voters with a disability, which is a direct violation of federal law.

Health Forward asks legislators on this committee to vote no on HB 2057. 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

Respectfully,

Jason Williams
Principal Impact Strategist - Power
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.