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HB 2453- Opposition
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Senate Committee on Federal & State Affairs

Chair Thompson and Members of the Senate Committee on Federal and State Affairs,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony. I am here today on behalf of Kansas Appleseed in opposition to HB 2453. This bill makes multiple changes to Kansas's election timelines, including moving up deadlines for voter registration and for requesting absentee ballots, and ending early in-person voting sooner.

Kansas Appleseed has a long history of protecting the right of Kansans to participate in free and fair elections and opposing policies that unnecessarily restrict access to the ballot. Although HB 2453 is framed as an expansion of early voting, the bill's combined changes reduce the number of days for Kansans to register, request a mail ballot, and successfully cast a vote.

Research consistently shows that shortening the time voters have to register, request an absentee ballot, or cast an early ballot suppresses turnout—particularly among voters who already face structural barriers.¹ While the bill modestly expands the window for transmitting absentee ballots to 22 days before an election, that change is negated by moving the absentee ballot request deadline back to 14 days before Election Day, ending voter registration 25 days before an election, and closing early in-person voting on the Friday before election day.²

The impact of these changes is not hypothetical. In the 2024 general election, more than 653,000 Kansans voted early, including 126,623 voters who returned a mail ballot.³ Importantly, mail voting is used disproportionately by certain groups: 40% of seniors voted by mail in 2024, and the U.S. Election Assistance Commission reports that 39% of disabled voters cast a ballot

¹ Searles, S., Hilton, K., & Medina, A. (2025, July 31). Barriers and Hardships: Why Some Youth Didn't Vote in 2024. CIRCLE.

<https://circle.tufts.edu/latest-research/barriers-and-hardships-why-some-youth-didnt-vote-2024>; Belle, R., Suzuki, S., & Medina, A. (2025, July 15). New Restrictions on Voter Registration Are Likely to Harm Young Voters. CIRCLE.

https://circle.tufts.edu/latest-research/new-restrictions-voter-registration-are-likely-harm-young-voters?utm_source=chatgpt.com; Weil, M., Stewart, C., Harper, T., Thomas, C., & Orey, R. (2020, January 16).

Logical Election Policy. Bipartisan Policy Center. <https://bipartisanpolicy.org/report/logical-election-policy/>; Papoutsis, Sofia (2022) "Election Laws and Voter Turnout in the United States," Res Publica - Journal of Undergraduate Research: Vol. 27 Available at: <https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/respublica/vol27/iss1/7>

² H.B. 2453, 2025 Biennium, 2026 Reg. Sess. (Kansas 2026).

https://www.kslegislature.gov/li/b2025_26/measures/hb2453/

³ Sloan, N. (2024, November 4). Kansas early voting tracker: Over 650,000 Kansans voted before Election Day. KMBC. <https://www.kmbc.com/article/kansas-early-voting-tracker-2024-election/62686353>

by mail in 2022.⁴ Shrinking the window to request a mail ballot while extending early in-person voting predictably advantages one method of voting over another. Kansas voters should not be suppressed because of arbitrary changes in deadlines and their voting method.

These restrictions are also especially harmful for young voters. According to research from Tufts University, nearly one-quarter of unregistered youth in 2024 said they missed the registration deadline or did not know how to register, a problem most acute among newly eligible voters. Youth also move at roughly twice the rate of older voters, often for college or work, requiring frequent re-registration.⁵ In 2024, nearly half of eligible but unregistered young people nationwide reported that confusion, missed deadlines, or administrative hurdles prevented them from registering.⁶ Making deadlines earlier only exacerbates these challenges.

Furthermore, voters turning 18 near a registration deadline experience turnout drops of up to 27% compared to peers whose 18th birthday was well before the deadline. The effect of missing their first election also lasted across multiple election cycles. Young people who faced registration uncertainty in one election were over 40% less likely to vote in subsequent elections.⁷ Similarly, during the 2012 election cycle, approximately 35,000 Kansans searched for voter registration information after the deadline had already passed.⁸ This is a clear indication that restrictive election timelines disenfranchise many eligible voters.

HB 2453 must also be considered in the context of recent changes to Kansas election law. As of January 1, 2026, Kansas no longer has a three-day grace period for mail ballots.⁹ By simultaneously eliminating that buffer and moving the absentee request deadline back another week, Kansas is narrowing the margin for error at every stage of the voting process, despite ongoing delays in mail delivery.

These policy choices are out of step with national norms. While nearly all states allow early voting, more than half allow voter registration to continue after early voting has begun.¹⁰ From 1996-2011, Kansas allowed registration as close as 15 days before an election, even though early voting began five days sooner.¹¹ The overlap ended in 2011 when the registration deadline was pushed back to 21 days before an election for administrative reasons, notwithstanding

⁴ Published September 4. (2025, September 4). Nearly 1 in 3 Americans Voted by Mail in 2024. States United Democracy Center. <https://statesunited.org/resources/americans-vote-by-mail-2024/>; Schur, L., Kruse, D., & Ameri, M. (2023, July). Disability and Voter Turnout in the 2022 Elections. Washington, D.C.; United States Election Assistance Commission.

⁵ Searles, S., Hilton, K., & Medina, A. (2025, July 31). *Barriers and Hardships: Why Some Youth Didn't Vote in 2024*. CIRCLE.

<https://circle.tufts.edu/latest-research/barriers-and-hardships-why-some-youth-didnt-vote-2024>

⁶ Belle, R., Suzuki, S., & Medina, A. (2025, July 15). *New Restrictions on Voter Registration Are Likely to Harm Young Voters*. CIRCLE.

https://circle.tufts.edu/latest-research/new-restrictions-voter-registration-are-likely-harm-young-voters?utm_source=chatgpt.com

⁷ Held, A. Am I Eligible to Register? Registration Rules, Eligibility Uncertainty, and Youth Voter Turnout. *Polit Behav* 47, 1551–1570 (2025). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-025-10003-z>

⁸ Street A, Murray TA, Blitzer J, Patel RS. Estimating Voter Registration Deadline Effects with Web Search Data. *Political Analysis*. 2015;23(2):225-241. doi:10.1093/pan/mpv002

⁹ S.B. 4, 2025 Biennium, 2025 Reg. Sess. (Kansas 2025).

https://www.kslegislature.gov/li/b2025_26/measures/sb4/

¹⁰ *Voter Registration Deadlines*. Vote.org. (n.d.). <https://www.vote.org/voter-registration-deadlines/>; *Early voting by state*. Vote.org (n.d.). <https://www.vote.org/early-voting-calendar/>

¹¹ Kansas Legislative Research Department. (2022, June 21). KANSAS VOTER REGISTRATION AND VOTING LAW CHANGES SINCE 1995. Topeka, KS.

ongoing improvements in election technology that reduce the need for such a restriction.¹² HB 2453 moves the state further away from proven, voter-friendly practices without any demonstrated administrative necessity.

In short, HB 2453 creates new obstacles under the guise of expanding access. The limited benefit of transmitting absentee ballots earlier does not outweigh the harm caused by earlier registration cutoffs, a sharply reduced window to request a mail ballot, and the compounding effect of the elimination of the grace period. These provisions will disproportionately affect young voters, voters who move frequently, and voters who rely on mail ballots—undermining confidence and participation in our democracy.

For these reasons, Kansas Appleseed urges the committee to reject HB 2453.

Thank you,

Mike Fonkert

¹² Kansas Legislative Research Department. (2022, June 21). KANSAS VOTER REGISTRATION AND VOTING LAW CHANGES SINCE 1995. Topeka, KS.; Kansas Legislative Research Department. (2011). Changes to Election Laws—Presidential Primary, Filing Deadlines, Local Primary Elections, Campaign Treasurer’s Reports, Filling a Vacated Senate Office, and Others—Senate Sub. for HB 2080. Topeka, KS.