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Written Testimony in Opposition to HB 2054 – Advanced Ballot Limitations
House Elections Committee, Rep. Blake Carpenter, chair
January 28, 2021

Mr. Chair, members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Rabbi Moti Rieber, and I am executive director of Kansas Interfaith Action, a statewide, multi-faith issue-advocacy organization that “puts faith into action” by educating, engaging and advocating on behalf of people of faith and the public regarding critical social and economic justice issues. I write today in opposition to of HB 2054.

Kansas has an unfortunate and rather shameful recent history of suppressing our citizens’ right to vote. The worst example of this was the Documentary Proof of Citizenship Law, which prevented over 50,000 Kansans from registering to vote and has been found unconstitutional, although it is still in our statute books. But for some years now the focus of this legislature has been to curtail this fundamental democratic right, rather than protecting and expanding it.

Yet despite this, 2020 was a great year for voting in Kansas. Record numbers of people voted, results were in a timely fashion, and many people were able to use the advanced ballot provisions (advanced in person voting, mail-in and drop-off voting) to exercise their franchise while still protecting themselves during the pandemic.

Of course we are aware of a lot of rumors about the use of mail in and advanced ballots in other states. These are falsehoods and should not affect our laws here in Kansas. No notable misconduct has been found, just as no voting by undocumented immigrants was found by our former Secretary of State. Voting works in the US, and in Kansas. We should leave it alone.

This bill is a solution in search of a problem. It would make it harder for people to help their neighbors vote. This is a particular concern for communities of faith because they often collect and deliver ballots from shut-ins, the elderly, the disabled, and others who are restricted in their movements. This bill would therefore prevent communities of faith from fulfilling a very important part of their community support role.

We expect to see a number of voter suppression measures introduced throughout the country in response to fear-mongering about the last election. Kansas doesn’t have to join them; we’ve been down that road before. Please vote no on HB 2054.

Thank you for your attention.

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