

Date: 5 February 2024

Bill Number: SB365

Opposition Written Testimony

Stacey Knoell, Executive Director, Kansas African American Affairs Commission

Chairman Thompson and Members of the Committee:

I am writing in opposition to SB365 which seeks to change the final deadline for accepting ballots to 7 pm on Election Day regardless of whether the ballot was postmarked before Election Day. The history of voting in America began as a privilege restricted to a very small slice of the population. As access slowly expanded, voting by mail has been a part of the electoral process for decades whether or not people realized its prevalence. Additionally, countless people fought, marched, and protested to expand the right to vote. The arc of history has witnessed wider access to the ballot box and the changes proposed by SB365 would take this country backward as a representative Democracy. College students, military families, and people who travel for work all rely on mail voting. Additionally, there are people with physical disabilities for whom standing in line to vote would be a hardship and people in long-term care facilities who have relied on mail ballots to ensure their voices are heard.

While there is much discussion concerning the exact number of ballots that would be disallowed, eliminating the 3-day grace period will disenfranchise thousands of voters who have done everything correctly. A voter who placed their ballot in the mail the Friday before an election may find their ballot thrown out as illegitimate. This is of special concern in the rural areas where mail is required to go out of state for processing. This bill effectively punishes voters who have done everything right due to the inefficiency of the United States Postal Service. Under SB365 thousands of voters will be disenfranchised every election cycle. A three-day grace period ensures that the votes of rural Kansas have a chance to be counted. Indeed, this was the prevailing logic surrounding the implementation of the 3-day grace period in the first place.

I urge you to vote no and not pass this bill out of committee.