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Written Testimony in Opposition to HB 2319, Advanced Ballot Deadline Limitations House Elections Committee, Rep. Blake Carpenter, Chair

February 16, 2021

Mr. Chair, Ranking Member Miller, 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 racial, economic and climate justice issues.

We have for some years worked in coalitions to expand voting rights in Kansas. In these matters our guiding principle has been that **everyone who is eligible to vote in Kansas should be allowed and encouraged to vote**, that there should be no unnecessary legal or bureaucratic impediments to either registration or voting. Thanks to the hard work of our coalition and voting champions in the legislature, there have been great strides taken in bringing Kansas out of the dark ages of Kobach-era voter suppression. But this bill would move us back in the wrong direction.

By all accounts, the 2020 election in Kansas was a rousing success. Despite the pandemic, record numbers of people voted, both in the primary and in the general election. The mail-in, drop-off and in-person voting mechanism all worked exactly the way they were supposed to. Kansas’ three-day deadline for return of advanced ballots worked well; most of the results were in on election night and those that weren’t, were finished within a few days.

Election laws like this one are the consequence of a campaign of misinformation in the aftermath of the November election. Even though multiple courts have found that **there was no election fraud anywhere in the country**, claims ran rampant in partisan circles that somewhere, somehow, shenanigans had taken place. And even after all that was disproven, categorically and repeatedly, still this year bills have sprang up all over the country, like this one including here in Kansas, to make it harder to vote, via 1) artificially and unnecessarily shortening the time limit for votes to be received, and 2) to limit the ability of election officials and the courts to modify deadlines in response to unexpected emergencies, like floods, storms, or pandemics.

Members of the committee, this bill is the quintessential solution in search of a problem. Kansas does not have a problem with either late turn-in of votes or rogue election officials. This bill would confuse things and make it harder for the system to function. It is the result of falsehoods promulgated on a national scale. It would make it harder for people to vote, exactly the opposite of what our policy should be. It’s unnecessary and it’s wrong. Please vote against HB 2319.