

Senate Bill 149

Senate Committee on Ethics, Elections and Local Government

Kansas Department of Health and Environment

January 29, 2020

Chairperson Bowers and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide neutral testimony on Senate Bill 149 which allows county election officials, with an applicant's consent, to acquire access to birth certificates from the State Registrar for individuals who apply to register to vote. This process will be implemented free of charge to the applicant. This proposal raises concerns for KDHE related to funding for Kansas' civil registration program.

KDHE is the designated agency responsible for civil registration, the process of registering vital events (births, deaths, marriage and divorce) and issuing certified copies representing those events. Kansas issues over 378,000 certified copies a year. These documents are critical to individuals needing to prove citizenship for a job, enter school, obtain a drivers' license or passport and in several states, register to vote. The State of Kansas authorizes fees to be assessed for certified copies of documents issued and supports a dedicated fee fund as the mechanism supporting operations for the State's civil registration program. As Senate Bill 149 is proposed, the Vital Statistics program will experience a significant decrease in revenue. In addition, programs supported by the Families and Children Investment fund per KSA 65-2418(4), that receive a portion of the fees assessed for certified copies of births, will also see a decrease in funds. There is more detail about the impact on State operations outlined in the fiscal note for this bill.

Finally, access to birth certificates from non-Kansas jurisdictions would need to be supported with fee payments. There is a system called the Electronic Verification of Vital Events (EVVE) supported by all vital records jurisdictions to verify and certify births. This was developed by the National Association of Public Health Statistics and Information Systems (NAPHSIS), the vital records professional association. EVVE would provide access to birth records throughout the country, but for a fee which again is not addressed in this bill.

Thank you for this opportunity to share concerns for the requirements of Senate Bill 149.