

March 7, 2023

House Committee on Elections
State Capitol
300 SW 10th Street
Topeka, KS 66612

Re: Health Forward Foundation opposition to Senate Bill 208 – banning ballot boxes in Kansas.

Chair Proctor and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of Health Forward Foundation (Health Forward), I submit this letter of testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 208. Health Forward works to support and build inclusive, powerful, and healthy communities characterized by racial equity and economically just systems. We oppose this legislation as it will negatively impact people's livelihoods and wellbeing. Voting rights are an important social driver of health, as recently determined by the American Medical Association, and this bill, which completely bans ballot drop boxes in Kansas, cuts directly against that. According to the Health and Democracy Index, the more inclusive and expansive voting access is, the better the health outcomes are for a state.

Barriers to voting access should be reduced not amplified. SB 208 creates unnecessary barriers that will most assuredly lead to hard-working people in rural communities in Kansas not having their votes counted because of distance to travel to drop off a ballot. It would harm those with obligations to childcare, care for a sick or elderly adult, or work by giving them less options to vote as their schedule demands. Additionally, this type of harmful legislation would affect Kansans of color most adversely, according to a Brennan Center for Justice study.

Last, arguments of voter fraud as a result of the use of ballot drop boxes are not based in any evidence. A poll of Republican and Democratic elections officials across the United States indicated that ballot boxes were not linked to any voter fraud, stolen, or tampered ballots. SB 208 only creates problems where there were nearly none. Indeed, in the past 7 years, there have only been 10 instances of voter fraud out of over 3.6 million votes cast according to the Heritage Foundation's data.

Health Forward asks legislators on this committee to vote no on SB 208. We would instead encourage the legislature to support ways to increase voter turnout and civic engagement in Kansas to empower citizens to participate more freely in the democratic process. Please feel free to contact me at nmadden@healthforward.org

Respectfully,

Nathan J. Madden, Ph.D.
Health Forward Foundation



**OUR
PURPOSE**

Every day we work to support and build inclusive, powerful, and healthy communities characterized by racial equity and economically just systems.