



MEMORANDUM OF SUPPORT

Absentee Ballot Drop-off

A.4128-A (Gottfried)/S.492 (Hoylman)

May 26, 2022

The Community Health Care Association of New York State (CHCANYS) strongly supports Absentee Ballot Drop-off A.4128-A (Gottfried)/S.3082A (Hoylman), which would authorize local Boards of Elections to establish absentee ballot drop-off locations.

CHCANYS is the statewide association of New York's 70+ federally qualified health centers (FQHCs), also known as community health centers (CHCs). Located in low-income and medically underserved communities, CHCs provide a full range of primary and preventive health care and enabling services for more than 2.1 million patients at over 800 sites, regardless of insurance, immigration status, or ability to pay. Among CHC patients, 90% are low-income, 68% are Black, Hispanic/Latinx, and people of color, 13% are uninsured, and 59% are enrolled in Medicaid or Child Health Plus. The medically underserved communities served by CHCs also have a long history of disenfranchisement. This bill would increase voter access to many New Yorkers who face barriers to exercising their right to vote.

Expanding qualifications to vote by absentee ballot during the 2020 election year was an important step to increasing voter access during the pandemic. This bill would build upon this progress by creating new accessible locations for physically submitting absentee ballots. In the current 2022 Midterm Primary Election season, over 30 states enable secure ballot drop boxes for voter access¹. Secure ballot drop boxes would provide more accessible and convenient locations to physically deliver an absentee ballot in areas where post offices or physical polling sites are not conveniently located or have long wait times. Absentee ballot drop boxes would create additional options for individuals who have access challenges such as lack of transportation or childcare. Still others may prefer or need to submit their absentee ballot at a physical location, as opposed to by mail, for many reasons such as concern about postal service delays before and on election day or missed postmark deadlines. As the COVID-19 pandemic continues with seasonal surges and new variants of concern, secure absentee ballot drop-off locations would also provide a safe voting alternative to voting via a traditional in-person polling site for at-risk individuals.

CHCANYS urges the New York State Legislature to pass Absentee Ballot Drop-off A.4128-A (Gottfried)/S.492 (Hoylman) to expand voter access. This bill would increase secure and accessible options for individuals who have historically faced voting barriers to cast their ballots.

For questions, please contact Marie Mongeon, Senior Director of Policy, at mmongeon@chcanys.org.

¹ <https://www.usvotefoundation.org/ballot-return-options#Note4>