



Disability Rights Iowa
SSB 3161 – Memorandum of Impact
February 9, 2024

Chairpersons and honorable members of the Committee. My name is Catherine E. Johnson. I am the Executive Director of Disability Rights Iowa. DRI is an independent, non-profit agency, which serves as the designated protection and advocacy system for people with disabilities in the state of Iowa, pursuant to federal mandates. The mission of the agency is to protect and advocate for the human and legal rights of Iowans with disabilities. I appear before you to share DRI's concerns regarding the impact of SSB 3161 on the Disability Community.

DRI represents Iowa voters with disabilities.

Disability Rights Iowa advocates for the voting rights of individuals with disabilities to promote their full participation in the electoral process, including registering to vote, casting a vote, and accessing polling places.

SSB 3161's impact on Iowa voters with disabilities

The proposed changes to Iowa State Code, particularly the amendments to Sec. 11. Section 39A.4, subsection one, paragraph c, subparagraphs (10) and (11), Code 2024, would impact the ability of Iowans with disabilities to have equal access to the voting process. These amendments would remove county auditor's ability to offer a secure absentee ballot drop box. Currently, county auditors may establish one absentee ballot drop box at their office. Drop boxes may be the most accessible option for Iowa voters with disabilities for numerous reasons. Drop boxes are more accessible for individuals as this provides individuals with the ability to deposit their ballot at a time that works for them or their caregivers. Drop boxes also provide Iowans with disabilities the ability to deposit their ballot without concerns



of encountering the flu, a virus, covid-19 and/or other infectious illnesses.

Developing a ballot eliminates concerns of privacy, tampering or voter fraud, timely delivery of mail and/or lack of regular mail pick up at their residence. Numerous bipartisan organizations have found that absentee ballot drop boxes are safe, secure, and accessible.

Thank you in advance for your thoughtful deliberation of DRI's concerns regarding the impact of SSB 3161 on Iowa Voters with disabilities.