



January 19, 2021

Kansas Senate
Kansas State Capitol
SW 8th &, SW Van Buren Street
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Re: Senate Bill 42 - Relating to the study and investigation of maternal deaths in the state of Kansas

Chair and Members of the Committee:

Health Forward Foundation provides leadership, advocacy, and resources to eliminate barriers and promote quality health for the uninsured and underserved. Since our inception 16 years ago, Health Forward has dedicated more than \$322 million toward health in our service area, which includes Allen, Johnson, and Wyandotte counties in Kansas. **We support Senate Bill 42, because the study and investigation of maternal deaths will reduce health inequities and lead to better health outcomes for Kansans.**

The study of maternal mortality levels in Kansas is critical for identifying and decreasing the risks associated with pregnancy and childbearing where they exist, particularly in communities of color and in rural communities. Studies show Black women in Kansas have pregnancy-related mortality rates that are at least twice as high as White women. Research also suggests rural residents around the country have a nine percent greater probability of severe maternal morbidity and mortality, compared with urban residents, and black women in rural communities experience the highest rates of maternal mortality. Research also indicates rates of maternal mortality and morbidity and pre-term birth continue to rise and infant mortality rates in the United States are far higher than those in similarly sized countries.

Senate Bill 42's language requiring the utilization of a social determinants of health review form that includes a section on racial inequities in healthcare, requiring the creation of a racially diverse external review committee to include Black stakeholders and charged with reviewing data on Black maternal death cases, and requiring that data collected be disaggregated by race demonstrates Kansas's commitment to health equity. While the majority of states have adopted a standardized maternal mortality review process, Senate Bill 42 will place Kansas among the 8 other states that recognize that maternal morbidity is an inequitable health outcome.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this issue. Senate Bill 42 will go a long way toward transforming our health care system to ensure that birth is not a deadly or traumatic experience for any woman, regardless of race, geographic location, socio-economic status, or health insurance status. We stand ready to be a resource to the Legislature as it relates to supporting policies that help all Kansans achieve their healthiest lives. Please feel free to contact me at mbryantmacklin@healthforward.org.

Sincerely,

McClain Bryant Macklin

McClain Bryant Macklin
Director of Policy and Strategic Initiatives