



House Committee on Education
Testimony in Opposition to House Bill No. 2601
February 12, 2020

I submit this written testimony in opposition to House Bill No. 2601. I am specifically opposed to the listing of each immunization separately rather than basing requirements on the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommendations and I am opposed to the addition of the expiration date of July 1 of the next calendar year for immunization requirements.

Communicable disease prevention and surveillance in the school setting is one of the most important and widely known roles of the school nurse. In fact, the first school nurse was Lina Rogers in 1902 in New York City. She was hired to reduce absenteeism in the public schools. Miss Rogers was able to reduce absenteeism by intervening with students' and families' health care needs related to communicable diseases. Immunizations were few at that time, resulting in large numbers of students being unscientifically excluded from school attendance for fear of transmitting communicable diseases. I have been a school nurse for twenty-two years in Kansas and, while the role of the school nurse has vastly expanded, communicable disease control and surveillance remains a daily focus of my work at school.

The Secretary of Kansas Department of Health and Environment currently has and the Secretary should continue to have the authority to determine school immunization requirements based on the ACIP recommendations. Schools are required to notify parents by May 15 of any school year of the immunizations due for student attendance in the next school year. This notice gives parents and health care providers 90-days, adequate time, to meet the requirements when school starts in the fall.

School nurses audit immunization records and we notify parents in a timely fashion when immunizations are due. Schools maintain immunization records so that, the event a case of a vaccine-preventable illness occurs within a school setting, then we can identify students and staff at risk. In the event of a case of a vaccine-preventable illness, the local health department advises us as to what preventive measures to take based on individual risk rather than to exclude large numbers of persons unscientifically, as in the time of Lina Rogers in 1902.

The reason I am opposed to the listing each individual immunization in the statute separately and having the July 1 expiration date is that it would make the ACIP recommendations nearly impossible to correctly implement over the course of the school year in the event any delay in the legislature is encountered or in the event a change is recommended by the ACIP. The number of students protected against vaccine-preventable infections could certainly be negatively affected by House Bill No. 2601 because it would make it more difficult to implement the immunization schedules. The authority to make the recommendations should remain with the Secretary to continue our collective work in this important area of public health.

We are fortunate to live in a time where vaccines have been scientifically developed and tested to protect us against many of the diseases that not only cause financial burden in society but could cause the

suffering, disability, and death of our young Kansas citizens. The ACIP recommends immunization schedules based on the best and most current evidenced-based practice. The ACIP is continually reviewing research. The ACIP can and does change their recommendations based on the best evidence as it is known and schools respond accordingly promptly.

I appreciate your consideration of my testimony as one of the many school nurses across Kansas who are on the front line in communicable disease prevention and surveillance. Let's work together to make vaccine-preventable infections rare and keep our schools healthy places to learn.

Respectfully submitted,

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