



February 13, 2020

Kansas Action for Children
Written testimony in opposition to HB 2601
Committee on Education

Chairman Huebert and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition to HB 2601. Kansas Action for Children's vision is to make Kansas the best state to raise -- and be -- a child, and our organization shapes health, education, and economic policies that improve the lives of Kansas children and families. We oppose specifying the required childhood immunizations for child care facility and school attendance in statute.

Why? We believe the health and well-being of Kansas children should not be subject to periodic votes in the legislature. The current process where trained medical professionals collaborate to update the lists of required vaccines is appropriate and necessary.

Vaccines keep children healthy and ready for school. Vaccines keep working adults healthy and businesses in operation. Vaccines protect those who are unable to be vaccinated for medical reasons from getting life-threatening illnesses. They are a cornerstone of public health, and they should not be made part of a partisan political process, even one with the best of intentions.

Shifting required vaccines from the current regulatory process to being listed in statutes will make it more difficult to quickly respond to changes made by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP). Given the legislative schedule, it would be difficult to ensure the list of vaccines required for school, which comes out in February, would be updated in a timely manner. It seems unlikely legislators would consistently be able to be made aware of any needed changes, introduce legislation, have a hearing, and pass a bill in time for the February notification.

Kansas already faces challenges in protecting our children's health through vaccines. Our state has one of the lowest vaccination rates in the country, which puts everyone at risk. According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, "when immunization rates are high, herd immunity develops and limits the spread of the disease, which helps protect those who cannot be vaccinated." Limiting disease is good for children, families, businesses, and the entire state.

Kansas should make it easier for families to receive vaccinations on schedule, but this bill would complicate the process. It would put public health up to a yearly debate.

For these reasons, Kansas Action for Children opposes HB 2601, which would change the current regulatory process and instead specify the required childhood immunizations for child care facility and school attendance. The current regulatory process through the Kansas Department of Health and Environment should not be altered. We respectfully request the Committee oppose this bill and work to maintain the health and safety of our state's children. We are happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John", with a large, sweeping flourish extending to the left.

John Wilson

President

Kansas Action for Children

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