



KANSAS ACADEMY OF  
FAMILY PHYSICIANS  
**CARING FOR KANSANS**

Testimony: SB 541 (Opponent)  
Senate Judiciary Committee  
March 7, 2022

By: Jennifer Bacani McKenney, MD, FAAFP (written only)

Chair Warren and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Kansas Academy of Family Physicians (KAFP), this written testimony is submitted in opposition to SB 541. The KAFP represents nearly 2,000 family physicians, resident physicians and medical students across our state. The mission of the KAFP is to advocate and collaborate for the health of all Kansans.

The KAFP supports public health efforts that serve to protect Kansas citizens and the communities in which they reside from public health threats. Prior to the pandemic, 67 of the 105 public health officers in the state were family physicians. These numbers are quickly diminishing as a result of measures like SB 541, which would tie the hands of family physicians from appropriately protecting their patients and communities.

Our members rely on science to guide their work. The Academy has a long-held position of supporting vaccinations as a *proven and effective strategy for preventing and controlling contagious disease spread*. Further, we know that mask requirements, reduction in large public gatherings, and other mitigation strategies have served to reduce the spread of contagious disease. A study published in the July 2021 issue of the *Journal of Health Economics* cited a 22% weekly reduction in positive COVID-19 cases in areas that instituted mask mandates during the months of June to August 2020<sup>1</sup>.

We need only to look to our history to understand the important role public health officers play in times of a health crisis. Even before the Spanish Flu of 1918, which originated in Ft. Riley, Kansas, colonial governments instituted disease mitigation ordinances as far back as 1662.<sup>2</sup>

Stripping public health officers and county commissioners of their ability to protect their communities with proven strategies based in science--tools that will have a positive impact on community health and reduce community spread of disease--will result in dire consequences for our state and its citizens for decades to come.<sup>3</sup>

The KAFP and our 2,000 members oppose SB 541.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer B. McKenney, MD, FAAFP  
KAFP President  
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<sup>1</sup> Published online 2021 Jun 3. doi: [10.1016/j.jhealeco.2021.102475](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhealeco.2021.102475)

<sup>2</sup> *The History of Public Health*; Institute of Medicine (US) Committee for the Study of the Future of Public Health. Washington (DC): National Academies Press (US); 1988

<sup>3</sup> <https://blog.petriefrom.law.harvard.edu/2021/01/25/public-health-law-vacuum-covid-19/>