

March 18, 2021

Senate Committee on Public Health and Welfare
Kansas State Capitol
300 SW 10th St.
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Kansas State Nurses Association Opposes Senate Bill 212

Dear Chair Hilderbrand, Vice Chair Gossage, and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Kansas State Nurses Association this written testimony is **submitted in opposition of Senate Bill 212**. The Kansas State Nurses Association (KSNA) is the largest association representing our over 40,000 RNs in Kansas. Our members are also constituent members of the American Nurses Association (ANA) which is the largest nursing association in the country.

It is the role and oath of a nurse to dedicate and devote ourselves to the welfare of whom we serve. We do this by providing evidence-based care and collaboration with other professions and organizations dedicated to the health of the communities.

Nurses must also advocate for, educate, and advise patients to adhere to vaccination schedules recommended by the ACIP, explaining their need and public health implications. Patients' fears and questions regarding immunizations should be acknowledged, and then answered with evidence-based information. Nurses must emphasize that recommended immunizations are safe and effective as proven by all evidenced-based research. As stated in the Code of Ethics for Nurses (ANA, 2015, p. 19), RNs have an ethical responsibility to "model the same health maintenance and health promotion measures that they teach and research..." which includes immunization against vaccine-preventable diseases.

The reduction or elimination of vaccine-preventable diseases is one of the greatest public health achievements of the United States. Current evidence and research illustrate that immunizations are essential to the primary prevention of disease from infancy throughout adulthood. According to the current recommendations of the ACIP, effective vaccination programs for children and adults promote and maintain the health of the populace.

To use Measles, as an example, The CDC reported 1,241 confirmed cases of measles from January 1 to September 12, 2019, in 31 states (CDC, 2019a). Individual reasons for decisions not to vaccinate vary and include concerns about the safety of a vaccination and/or its ingredients, religious or philosophical objections, fear of side effects and associated illness, and lack of urgency or priority, explained in part by the supposition that herd immunity will protect the unvaccinated from infection of adults and children who are susceptible to the transmission of the highly contagious measles virus but of those, young children under the age of 5, adults over 20 years, pregnant women, and those with compromised immune systems assume the most considerable risk for contraction and complications of the disease when exposed to persons unvaccinated for measles(CDC, 2019b,c). By not following immunization guidelines, we put other's health in peril, with risk of illness, disabilities, and death.

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It is important that the list of childcare and school vaccination requirements remain under the authority of the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE). By removing the regulatory authority of public health experts at KDHE to determine vaccination requirements for school and childcare facilities, SB 212 risks Kansas' ability to respond to the best scientific recommendations for immunizations as set forth by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) to protect our children from vaccine-preventable diseases.

We strongly oppose this bill and are in favor of the KDHE Secretary *retaining* the flexibility and authority to respond to new vaccines recommended by the ACIP. Listing vaccines in statute, as proposed in SB 212, would lead to confusion as recommendations change. A duplicative legislative step would only serve to delay protection of Kansas citizens from preventable diseases and would add a layer of politicization to vaccinations, a proven public health strategy.

Thank you for the opportunity to present our concern. In summary, we **oppose SB 212** and are in favor of the Kansas Department of Health and Environment Secretary retaining the flexibility and authority to be responsive to new vaccines recommended by the ACIP by providing scientific, evidenced-based decisions for Kansas citizens.

Sincerely,



Kelly Sommers, RN, BSN
Director
Kansas State Nurses Association

Kansas State Nurses Association Board of Directors

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