

Senate Committee on Public Health and Welfare
March 19, 2021

Chair Hilderbrand, Vice Chair Gossage, and Members of the Committee, this written testimony **is submitted in opposition of Senate Bill 212.**

Vaccinations are among the greatest achievements of public health. The current childhood vaccination schedule protects against many diseases that once claimed the lives of thousands each year in the U.S. With the potential for the epidemiology of diseases to shift over time, new diseases to emerge, and vaccination recommendations to change, 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 child care 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.

Each quarter, ACIP, which is comprised of medical and public health experts, reviews all available science before deciding on vaccine recommendations. ACIP recommendations inform decisions to both add vaccines from the list of Kansas requirements. We 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.

It is also worthy of note that nearly every state delegates to their respective state health department the authority to determine vaccination requirements. In Kansas, minimal changes have been made to the list of school vaccination requirements, only three times in the past 41 years. The current regulation process is used only as necessary to align Kansas childcare and school requirements with the best evidence-based, scientific recommendations available.

For me as a parent, the school requirements provided an extra layer of credibility as I talked through vaccines with my health provider, making me more likely to vaccinate to protect my children. I want those decisions made by public health experts, not legislators.

Vaccinations have significantly decreased rates of vaccine-preventable diseases protecting the lives and health of Kansans from once-common diseases. Vaccines are safe and given to millions of children each year. Side effects are generally minor and temporary; serious reactions are very rare. The United States vaccine safety program closely and constantly monitors the safety of vaccines.

Thank you for the opportunity to present our concern. In summary, I **strongly 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.

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