



KANSAS
ASSOCIATION OF
COUNTIES

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Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee
February 13, 2023
SB 6

Kansas Association of Counties
Opponent Testimony – Written Only

Chairwoman Gossage and members of the Committee:

Thank you for allowing the Kansas Association of Counties to offer testimony in opposition of SB 6, which would limit the ability of Kansas counties to take certain steps to protect their residents from infectious or communicable disease.

While this bill also impacts the powers of the Secretary of the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, the Kansas Association of Counties will focus solely on the provisions of the bill that specifically impact the powers of counties, county commissioners, and local health departments.

When infectious diseases strike, the first and most effective defense is a local response. Cutting off infection before a disease has spread significantly can be effective in saving lives, money, time and resources. Isolating an individual before they spread the measles, for example, can prevent a schoolwide infection. SB 6 would prevent local health officers from ordering such a quarantine. While local health officers could still suggest quarantines, they would no longer be able to enforce them.

Further, SB 6 is an invasion of local control. During the 2020 Special Session the legislature established that locally elected officials had the ability to review and override or revoke orders made by the local health officer. This was done so that these decisions were made by local elected officials. SB 6 seeks to undo this by preventing the local board of health from being able to order quarantines or prevent gatherings in their local authority.

These changes will undermine local response to infectious disease spread, which will likely make any outbreaks larger and more disruptive than they otherwise could have been.

We respectfully ask that the committee reconsider this legislation given the potential for disease spread and the danger that this could pose to Kansas communities.

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