



February 21, 2022

Heather Braum, Health Policy Advisor
Kansas Action for Children
Testimony in opposition to HB 2498
House Committee on Health and Human Services

Chairwoman Landwehr and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition to HB 2498, which would prohibit KDHE from requiring the COVID-19 vaccine for child care centers and public school attendance.

Kansas Action for Children is a nonprofit advocacy organization working to make Kansas a place where every child has the opportunity to grow up healthy and thrive. We work across the political spectrum to improve the lives of Kansas children through bipartisan advocacy, partnership, and information-sharing on key issues, including early learning and education, health, and economic security for families.

First, we must acknowledge the sentiments that led to this bill. As we're climbing out from a horrific pandemic, over the last two years we have witnessed science evolving in real time through the tracking of a brand new virus that has had a devastating impact upon society. And we've all been overloaded by information, especially on digital platforms; it's made us all dizzy, no matter who you are. We acknowledge that.

But today, we want to focus on how this bill impacts all Kansas children.

KDHE staff are subject matter experts on vaccines and have applied their expertise and competence on the required childhood vaccines list changes over the past several decades. They've never gotten it wrong when they advanced requirements in the past, the few times the list has been updated. **Any childhood vaccination that is approved and added to the required vaccination list has been available for many years before it is ever made a requirement in Kansas.**

While we must emphasize, repeatedly, that the SARS COV-2 virus IS NOT the same as influenza viruses, when it comes to the vaccines, we may be moving into a time where we see a lot of parallels between the annual flu vaccine and the COVID vaccine. **KDHE has never considered including the flu vaccine on the required vaccination list for child care centers or public schools.**



The COVID-19 vaccine addressed in this bill has been available less than 15 months. It's not even approved yet for kids under 5, one of the populations covered by this bill. And, so far, the efficacy of the COVID-19 vaccine for children under age 5 hasn't even been proven. **This bill is a solution looking for a problem.**

In addition, by understanding the legislative process, passing HB 2498 could potentially put the entire required childhood vaccination list in question or in peril; that is a worst-case scenario from our perspective. Vaccines are safe. They are effective. They protect children's health; they protect the community's health; they protect the health of immunocompromised people; they keep parents in jobs; and they keep vaccine-preventable disease outbreaks from overwhelming our health care system and hurting our communities.

For the sake of Kansas children and their health, please vote "NO" on HB 2498. This is a premature bill and is not something Kansas needs to act on.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our opposition to HB 2498. Please do not hesitate to contact me at heather@kac.org if you have any questions.