



To: Chairwoman Brenda Landwehr, and members of the House Health Care and Human Services Committee
From: David Jordan, President and CEO, United Methodist Health Ministry Fund
Date: February 21, 2022
RE: HB 2498

Chairwoman Landwehr and Members of the House Health Care and Human Services Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide public comment in opposition to HB 2498, which prohibits the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) from requiring COVID-19 vaccinations in public schools and child care spaces

The United Methodist Health Ministry Fund (Health Fund) is a 35-year-old, \$70-million health philanthropy located in Hutchinson. Our mission is to improve the health of Kansans. We focus on three strategic areas—access to care, early childhood development, and Healthy Congregations, a program aimed at addressing community health by engaging churches throughout Kansas.

We support healthy and strong communities. A strong public health system is key to that. KDHE has dedicated health professionals on staff to determine the course of public health in our state. We believe that it should continue to be KDHE's duty to decide which vaccines are required to keep children and the general public safe. We believe science should guide public health policy, not politics.

According to the [CDC](#), "Vaccine-preventable disease levels are at or near record lows." One tool used to maintain low levels of disease is vaccination law, including school and child care vaccination laws. We feel that science should also guide any COVID-19 vaccination requirements in order to save lives and prevent severe illness.

According to the [Kaiser Family Foundation](#), as of January 2022 only 16.3% of Kansas children ages 5-11 were fully vaccinated against COVID-19. COVID-19 is still impacting the daily lives and education of schoolchildren—[4 in 10](#) parents reported disruption to their child's in-person learning during the first month of the year. Allowing KDHE to determine the use of vaccine requirements will ensure the decisions are guided by science.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify in opposition to HB 2498. Please let me know if you have any questions or if I can be of assistance.