

Bryan & Cynthia Thompson  
851 Beatrice Street  
Salina, KS 67401

Re: Testimony in opposition to House Bill 2498; February 17, 2022

Members of the House Committee on Health and Human Services,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in opposition to House Bill 2498. Frankly, we are baffled. For generations Kansas law has given the Secretary of Health and Environment the authority and obligation to protect children—and the public at-large—by requiring children to be immunized against vaccine-preventable illnesses before they are allowed to enroll in school or attend child care facilities. The wisdom of such policy seems obvious. Diseases like smallpox, polio, diphtheria, measles and more were all brought to heel through vaccination. For it to work, though, vaccination must be nearly universal, or these diseases will have a population reservoir through which to spread and evolve. That's one reason why it's so important to vaccinate children. They all go to school, and requiring immunization for enrollment ensures there won't be outbreaks spreading like wildfire in a setting where children are in close proximity to large numbers of their peers.

Why, then, would it make any sense whatsoever to treat the SARS-CoV-2 virus any differently? We are now beginning the third year of a global pandemic. It will soon have taken the lives of more than a million Americans, and five million more around the world. Were you outraged when terrorists destroyed the World Trade Center, killing nearly 3,000 people? Well, COVID is killing approximately that same number of Americans EVERY DAY! That doesn't even take into account the number who will recover—but not completely, suffering the effects of “long COVID” for years, perhaps permanently. It doesn't have to be this way. The vaccines are not perfect. They can't completely prevent infection, but they are remarkable effective at preventing the worst consequences.

The science is irrefutable. COVID is now a disease of the unvaccinated, for the most part. Kansans overwhelmingly (95%) support vaccines, immunization requirements for children to attend schools and childcare, and leaving the authority of setting wellness vaccine policy to the state's health department. <https://nurturekc.org/docs/2022%20Kansans%20Attitudes%20Toward%20VaccinesSurvey-HIGHLIGHTS-NurtureKC.pdf> Please don't succumb to a vocal minority seeking to use pseudo-science to hamstring the Secretary of Health and Environment. Act for the greater good of Kansans, Americans, and indeed the whole world. Kill House Bill 2498.

Thank you for your attention,

Bryan and Cynthia Thompson  
851 Beatrice Street  
Salina, KS 67401