



TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO SB 212

March 22, 2021

Chairman Hilderbrand and Members of the Public Health and Welfare Committee,

The Kansas Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics (KAAP) represents more than 425 practicing pediatricians in the state. The KAAP has the fundamental goal that all children and adolescents in Kansas have the opportunity to grow safe and strong. It is with this goal in mind that we want to share our strong opposition to SB 212 prohibiting the Secretary of Health and Environment from permanently requiring additional immunizations to attend a childcare facility or school. This is detrimental not only to public health in Kansas, but specifically child health and school safety. Kansas pediatricians oppose bills that intentionally or unintentionally have a negative impact on vaccination coverage in the state. By interfering with benign sections of statute, we are unintentionally giving a platform to misinformation about vaccines. Vaccines are safe and effective.

The legislature serves a critical function in passing laws to protect the citizens of Kansas. Decisions to change the immunization laws should be held to the highest standards of evidence-based scientific deliberations. Should vaccine recommendations change (including change in dosing or schedule, addition of new vaccine against pandemic infectious disease, etc) it is essential to our state to be able to adapt and respond to these issues in a timely and effective manner. The public health experts at KDHE should maintain the ability to determine and address critical public health related issues without political undermining. The Kansas Legislature should consider policies that build upon, rather than hinder immunization rates.

All 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico require proof of immunization for childcare and school attendance. While the AAP supports appropriately implemented medical exemptions to specific immunization requirements, the Academy opposes nonmedical exemptions to specific immunization requirements because it leads to lower immunization rates and increases the risk of spreading dangerous vaccine-preventable diseases.

Childhood vaccines have been extremely successful in reducing disease. With timely vaccination, children can be protected from 16 vaccine-preventable diseases, and there are record-low rates for most (but not all) vaccine preventable diseases. Ironically, due to the tremendous success of vaccines, the result has been a low disease burden with resulting low disease awareness, more attention paid to vaccine risks than benefits, multiple vaccines to be given, and low tolerance for vaccine risks. As a consequence, there are some parents who have concerns about vaccines.

The KAAP is advocating to increase vaccine confidence and share accurate messages on the importance, safety, and effectiveness of vaccines. Nine out of ten families follow vaccine guidelines and recommendations for their children; those who don't are a minority offline, but disproportionately vocal online. The majority of parents believe immunization is important and trust pediatricians as one of the most important sources of immunization information. Vaccines benefit individual children and communities through herd immunity. Our patients who are too young or too sick to be immunized are at



even greater risk as more Kansans opt out of vaccines. The diseases returning in the absence of sufficient numbers of the population being immunized are devastating, and deadly.

Serious disease can occur if a child and family are not immunized. Vaccines are tested thoroughly before licensure, and vaccine safety assessment networks exist to monitor vaccine safety after licensure. Non-vaccinated children put vaccinated children and medically exempt children who live in that same area at risk. We must continue vaccinating to protect people by lessening and eliminating disease outbreaks.

Vaccinations have led to steep decreases and eradication of many significant infectious diseases such as polio, measles, mumps, pertussis, and Haemophilus influenza type B (Hib). Without immunizations, students, their families, and their communities are at risk for serious, potentially fatal diseases. Immunizations are our best protection against preventable disease and can help all Kansans live longer, healthier lives.

What might seem like simple adjustments to legislative and regulatory processes could have real-life consequences for the health of children across the population of the state. Anything that hinders progress is a step in the wrong direction. The public health experts at KDHE should maintain the ability to determine and address critical health related issues based on currently available evidence.

On behalf of Kansas Pediatricians, we would like to express our strong opposition to SB 212 and respectfully request your NO VOTE on SB 212.

Respectfully submitted,

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Legislative Coordinator
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References:

- American Academy of Pediatrics at AAP.org/immunization
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/index.html>
- Vaccination reports http://www.kdheks.gov/immunize/kindergarten_coverage.htm
- Leading Medical Organizations Endorse Strong School and Childcare Vaccination Requirements <https://www.immunize.org/catg.d/p2071.pdf>
- Vaccines Work <https://www.immunize.org/catg.d/p4037.pdf>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Impact of Vaccines in the 20th and 21st Centuries <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pubs/pinkbook/downloads/appendices/e/impact.pdf>

Vaccinate Your Family https://vaccinateyourfamily.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/FINAL_Interactive_eBook_Revised_Oct2019b.pdf