



TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO SB 6

February 13, 2023

Chair Gossage and Members of the Senate Public Health & Welfare Committee,

The Kansas Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics (KAAP) represents more than 450 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 communicate our opposition to SB 6 that would restrict the authority of the secretary of health and environment and local health officers to prevent the introduction and spread of infectious or contagious diseases and repeals the authority of the secretary to quarantine individuals.

In the National Academy of Medicine (formerly the Institute of Medicine) report “The Future of Public Health,” researchers describe public health as “**fulfilling society’s interest in assuring conditions in which people can be healthy.**”

Public health officers are not political, elected officials; they are professionals, physicians and nurses with the education and experience to make decision based on science and not public opinion. KAAP is concerned by some of the potential public health implications if SB 6 is adopted into law. Prohibiting the Secretary of Health and Environment and local Public Health experts from issuing scientifically supported orders to safely managing physical contact removes a critical intervention during outbreaks.

While our organization understands the concerns about the economic, social, and health impacts of quarantine and social distancing held by those supporting this legislation, the restrictions on public health officers and elected officials could place the wellness and livelihood of the entire state at risk. While advocates of the policy lament the months of the restrictions that the COVID-19 pandemic brought, it is important to understand that more infectious disease like Ebola and Measles, both of which have witnessed outbreaks in the United States in the last few years, require action in hours rather than days to months to curtail broad spread. Any policy that restricts swift action by public health officers places all at risk. If anything, the COVID-19 pandemic has taught us that the security of our health is not something to take for granted. The future is unpredictable, and it is important for our health officers to be able to act rapidly in the best interest of our population.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, our health departments helped healthcare workers obtain Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) when it was in short supply. They also provided for testing, contact tracing and vaccinations. Their contributions are invaluable to the health of our communities.



The KAAP asks that oppose SB 6 that would impede our abilities to respond to unforeseeable future public health emergencies.

Thank you for your time and attention. We welcome any questions you might have and are happy to serve as your resource on all pediatric issues.

Respectfully submitted,

Dena Hubbard, MD, FAAP

Chair, Public Policy Committee
Kansas Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics