



**KANSAS ACADEMY OF
FAMILY PHYSICIANS
CARING FOR KANSANS**

**Testimony: House Bill 2094
House Health & Human Services Committee
January 18, 2012
Deborah S. Clements, MD, FAAFP, President**

Chairman Landwehr and members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to offer our perspective on **House Bill 2094**. HB 2094 would add a new exemption—objection based on “personal beliefs”—to the current statutory immunizations required for school-aged children. Kansas already allows exemptions for religious and medical reasons. **The Kansas Academy of Family Physicians (KAFP) is opposed to the new exemption proposed in this bill.**

Mandatory immunization requirements for children entering childcare facilities and schools have resulted prevention of disease both in Kansas and across the country. Of the 13 vaccine-preventable diseases, the United States has been successful in reducing cases by 92% and deaths by 99% because of effective public health policies. The same is true for disease reduction in our state (Roush, SW, et al., JAMA 2007:298(18)2155-2163).

Currently, twenty states allow exemptions based on parents’ personal beliefs. Several recent outbreaks of measles, pertussis, and varicella (chickenpox) have been traced to pockets of unvaccinated children in states that allow personal belief exemptions. These outbreaks affect not only the unvaccinated children, but also children and adults who are not fully protected due to incomplete immunity (e.g., people with cancer, rheumatologic illness or pregnancy). Public health works when everyone participates.

The proposed exemption represents a clear danger to the health of Kansans. States with personal exemptions had 90 percent more cases of whooping cough than states with less liberal exemptions. Exempted children are 22-35 times more likely to get measles than vaccinated children; and, rising rates of vaccine exemptions can undermine vaccine-preventable disease elimination. Outbreaks can occur among those unable to be vaccinated due to age or medical conditions. Immunizations are a tremendous public health achievement, saving tens of thousands of lives each year in the U.S. alone.

Disease outbreaks carry significant costs, both in terms of human suffering, treatment, and management to prevent spread. Each year of vaccination in the US saves \$10 billion in direct costs and \$33 billion in disability and lost productivity. Immunizations work, save lives, and are safe and important tools in the prevention of disease and protection of Kansas’s citizens. I encourage you to oppose this legislation for the health of our state.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments.

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