

MID AMERICA IMMUNIZATION COALITION

A program of the Maternal and Child Health Coalition

6400 Prospect, Suite 216, Kansas City, Missouri 64132

January 18, 2012

**Kansas House Health and Human Services Committee
HB2094**

Dear Committee Members:

The members of the Mid America Immunization Coalition are opposed to HB 2094 allowing parents to sign a statement declining immunizations for their child for reasons of conscience or personal beliefs.

In the U.S., vaccines have reduced or eliminated many infectious diseases that once routinely killed or harmed many infants, children, and adults. However, the viruses and bacteria that cause vaccine-preventable disease and death still exist and can be passed on to people who are not protected by vaccines. These diseases result in doctor's visits, hospitalizations, and premature deaths. Vaccine-preventable diseases also have many social and economic costs: sick children miss school, cause parents to lose time from work and increase insurance costs. It is easy for us to see with the passage of the proposed legislation the re-introduction of vaccine-preventable diseases into our communities.

What if we stopped vaccinating?

Diseases that are almost unknown would stage a comeback. Before long we would see epidemics of diseases that are nearly under control today. More children would get sick and more would die.

Vaccines protect not only individuals but entire communities. That is why vaccines are vital to the public health goal of preventing diseases. If a critical number of people within a community are vaccinated against a particular illness, the entire group becomes less likely to get the disease. This protection is called community, or herd, immunity. On the other hand, if too many people in a community do not get vaccinations, diseases can reappear.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, cases of measles have reached a ten-year high; with over half of the cases involving children whose parents refused to immunize their children. Others who developed measles during these outbreaks include those who were too young to receive vaccines or medically unable to receive them.

These outbreaks may foreshadow difficult times ahead if individual interests defeat public health concerns.

We face uncertainty about many medical issues, to compound that fear with an introduction of unimmunized children into school populations with the possibility of transporting those diseases home to babies and infants would be moving Kansas backward. Research shows VACCINES WORK!

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