

Dear Elected Ladies and Gentlemen of the Kansas Senate,

I am writing to address Kansas bill HB 2205 mandating the meningitis vaccine to children. I thoughtfully oppose this bill for the following reasons: 1.) Meningitis is rare 2.) Due to adverse side effects this vaccine should never be mandated. 3.) The motivations for this bill need to be investigated more thoroughly.

Meningitis is a rare disease. In 2016, Kansas saw five cases.¹ Five cases of meningitis does not warrant elected public officials demanding vaccination or facing dire consequences such as an inability to attend school. Usurping individual and parental rights is an aggressive and egregious intrusion. Parents should have the right to weigh the facts about the disease against the facts about the vaccination and decide accordingly.

As per package inserts, Menactra² and Menveo³ produce serious adverse events (SAE's) in 1 percent of recipients. A third vaccine, Menomune⁴ sickens 1.3 percent . According to the CDC Pink Book, 0.3 percent of those with serious adverse events from Menactra or Menveo ((MenACWY) will die.⁵

What does that math look like for Kansas?

The United States Census Bureau for Kansas tells us there are almost three million people living in Kansas and about 25% of us are under the age of eighteen. Seven percent are under the age of five.⁶ No numbers are given for ages 6 to 12, so I estimated 14% of the children are eleven or under and not intended to be vaccinated, leaving a total of 330,000 children who would possibly be inoculated.

Simple calculations using the percents of serious adverse events (SAE's) above, we can estimate that 3,300 children would have SAE's from Menactra and Menveo. There would be 4,290 students with SAE's from Menomune. Deaths would number ten. All to avoid five cases of meningitis. Clearly, a raised eyebrow is justified when a mandate stripping citizens of their rights is proposed. Again, motivation needs to be investigated.

The serious adverse events listed are: irritability, abnormal crying, fever, drowsiness, fatigue, injection site pain and swelling, vomiting, diarrhea, headache, joint pain, sudden loss of consciousness, brain inflammation, convulsions, Guillain Barre Syndrome, and death.³

This is not a laundry list of minor inconveniences. These can be life-long, debilitating, illnesses that can reduce a student's once-promising future to a life spent overcoming disability while parents deplete savings and retirements in an effort to recover their children.

As stated earlier, the population is about three million in Kansas. With five cases of meningitis last year, that means one in every 600,000 are affected. Should we lose our parental rights over this statistic?

Students can be taught to eat better, get good rest, not to share food, glasses, water bottles, eating utensils, lipsticks, tissues, or towels, and to wash their hands often, keep up levels of vitamin C and vitamin D. Meningitis isn't transferred easily. It has to be through intimate contact (exchanging throat

secretions), not casual contact. The disease doesn't spread through the air and it doesn't live outside the human body for very long.

Our hope doesn't lie inside a needle or a pill or another dollar from the pharmaceutical industry and its lobbyists. Let's not let Kansas go down this abyss. Let's rise above this very short-sighted solution to a disease that, based on the statistics, has an extremely low incidence rate and a very low likelihood of transmission in a school setting.

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1. <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/65/wr/pdfs/mm6552md.pdf> (page 11 lists Kansas)
2. <https://www.fda.gov/downloads/BiologicsBloodVaccines/Vaccines/ApprovedProducts/UCM131170.pdf>
3. <https://www.fda.gov/downloads/BiologicsBloodVaccines/Vaccines/ApprovedProducts/UCM201349.pdf>
4. <https://www.fda.gov/downloads/BiologicsBloodVaccines/Vaccines/ApprovedProducts/UCM308370.pdf>
5. <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pubs/pinkbook/mening.html> (Adverse events following vaccination)
6. <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/PST045215/20>