

Kansas State Nurses Association Oppose HB 2498

February 15th, 2022

Madam Chair and Committee,

The Kansas State Nurses Association (KSNA) is the largest nursing association in Kansas representing RNs around our state of Kansas. Kansas State Nurses Association is also constituent members of the American Nurses Association (ANA) which is the largest nursing association in the country. In a recent study, KSNA was the 2nd most trusted association on vaccine education and information. Registered Nurses (recent Gallup poll) is the most trusted profession for ten years in a row.

We must support all required childhood vaccines to attend daycare and schools to prevent outbreaks that can cause illness, permanent disability, and death of a child. Children must be protected to attend all public schools as it is the breeding ground for a lot of severe diseases. Those diseases can then be passed on to our frail older adults, pregnant women, unprotected babies, and children with high risk.

82% of Americans support required childhood vaccines to attend all schools. 88% believe that the benefits of childhood vaccines out-way any possible risks. Only 17% of Americans believe that there should be a right to choose even if it creates health risks to others.

It is important to speak on all vaccines that are required for children to attend school, but it is also important to reflect on some history of vaccines, including the state of Kansas. KSNA wants to share on two very important vaccines and the difference it made in the health of Kansans.

Prior to the polio vaccine people, mostly children, were permanently disabled or died. Disabilities, paralysis, and death were caused by polio virus spreading from person to person which infected the person's spinal cord. Between 2 and 10 out of 100 people who had paralysis from poliovirus infection died, because the virus affects the muscles that helped them breathe. If a single child remains infected, children in all countries are at risk of contracting polio. Data is gathered on the use of the vaccine to evidence the decrease in the diseases. For example, in 1956, 15,128 cases of polio were reported to the Public Health Service. In 1955, same period, the cases were almost double, 28,8116. Failure to eradicate polio from these last remaining strongholds could result in as many as 200,000 new cases every year, within 10 years, all over the world. There is no cure for polio, it can only be prevented. Polio vaccine, given multiple times, can protect a child for life.

Residents of Protection, Kansas, gathered in the high school gym in April 1957 to receive the polio vaccine. Our small southwest Kansas town was the first in the nation to be fully inoculated against

he disease. Photos of our nurses giving the polio vaccine in Protection continue to flood the internet as we made history in our country caring for our children's health.

In St. Mary's, Kansas, there is a mass gravesite where 8 children of the same parents are buried due to contracting the polio virus.

Exposure to some bacteria, viruses, and other infectious agents can increase a pregnant woman's risk of having a miscarriage or having a baby with severe birth defects because they can pass from the mother to the unborn baby. These infectious agents are called "teratogens." Some of these teratogenic diseases include chicken pox (varicella zoster virus) and rubella (German measles). While many think that Chicken Pox is harmless childhood illness, it can have devastating effects to pregnant women and their unborn children. When a pregnant woman has a chicken pox infection, skeletal and/or brain damage in the unborn fetus occurs in 1% to 10% of cases. Chicken Pox infection late in pregnancy can result in the death of the unborn child in up to 33% of cases.¹ Chicken Pox vaccinations can prevent the spread of this virus in the population helping to protect pregnant women and their unborn children.

As nurses we understand the apprehension some parents may feel when bringing their child to a health agency or pediatrician's office to get their child's first vaccine. Parents always want to make sure that they are doing the very best for their children. Just the sight of a needle can make the best parent cringe because they don't want their child to experience pain and cry. Even nurses can feel that way. It is normal. In addition, social media has given an outlet for individuals to spread misinformation to families and create fear for something that doesn't exist. Our concern is what your child will experience when they get one of those diseases that vaccines are protecting them against. To see a child on a ventilator or die because they weren't vaccinated is the most difficult experience for a nurse because we know it could have been prevented. We must keep all regulations in place for required childhood vaccines and to support nurses who always practice for the public good.

Best regards,

KANSAS STATE NURSES ASSOCIATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS



KELLY SOMMERS, BSN, RN
State Director
Kansas State Nurses Association

