



March 19, 2023

Jennifer Adhima, Executive Director
Kansas Head Start Association
Written-only Opponent Testimony SB 315
Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee

Chairwoman Gossage and members of the Committee:

Thank you for holding a hearing to address Senate Bill 315. I am the Executive Director of the Kansas Head Start Association (KHSA). KHSA is the voice for the Head Start and Early Head Start programs in Kansas. These programs provide early childhood education services to nearly 7,000 young children and pregnant women across the state. KHSA has a long history of advocating for policies, practices, and programs that support the health and well-being of all of our youngest Kansans and their families, which is why I am writing in opposition to SB 315.

SB 315 removes the vaccine requirements that exist to keep our youngest Kansans safe, healthy, and thriving. We know from research that health is the foundation of school readiness for young children, which is why all Head Start programs work to ensure that children are up to date on immunizations and their Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment (EPSDT) schedule and can access needed health care services. Childhood vaccines allow children to avoid life-changing diseases and give them opportunity for optimal growth and development.

Infectious diseases of all kinds can pose great risks in child care settings, particularly those that serve children ages 0-3. Quality child care providers understand the importance of infection control practices to ensure the health of children in their care. These same practices prevent closures of their child care business and keep parents at work. Child care providers take great care to reduce infectious diseases in these environments through basic infection control practices like sanitization of surfaces and toys, but the most serious infectious disease risks are mitigated through our current child care licensing vaccination requirements. These requirements not only protect the children in care, they protect the health of the child care providers themselves- adults who may have weakened immune systems due to health problems, chemotherapy, or transplants.

I worry that expanding vaccination exemptions will unravel the hard work that has nearly eradicated many terrible diseases (like measles, polio, and whooping cough) that, historically, had devastating effects on young children and their families. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding SB 315. I am happy to serve as a resource to the Committee on this matter should you have further questions.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Adhima
Executive Director
jadhima@ksheadstart.org

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www.ksheadstart.org

Testimony for SB 315

Opponent

Senate Public Health Committee:

As a nurse, I am submitting this testimony in opposition to SB 315. This bill has the potential to put our children, schools and general public in extreme danger. Vaccines are safe and effective and there is strong agreement across partisan lines that wellness vaccines are beneficial. In fact, Nurture KC found in 2022 that 95% of Kansans believe vaccinations against diseases like measles, polio and mumps is important for maintaining good health.

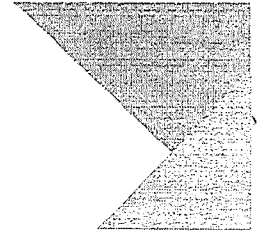
I urge you to vote no on SB 315 and not alter immunization requirements.

Regards,

Joan Anderson, RN

Registered Nurse/Private Citizen

Roeland Park/Johnson County, KS



March 21, 2023

Heather Braum, Health Policy Advisor
Kansas Action for Children
Written-only Testimony in opposition to SB 315
Senate Committee on Public Health and Welfare

Chairperson Gossage and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition to SB 315. Kansas Action for Children is a nonprofit advocacy organization working to make Kansas a place where every child has the opportunity to grow up healthy and thrive. We work across the political spectrum to improve the lives of Kansas children through bipartisan advocacy, partnership, and information-sharing on key issues, including early learning and education, health, and economic security for families.

SB 315 would make it much easier for anyone (adult or child) to receive an exemption from *any* vaccine requirement for basically any reason at work, child care, or K-12 schools and indicates that the beliefs are not to be questioned. SB 315 also removes the meningitis vaccine requirement for living in student housing at Kansas universities and colleges.

SB 315 is an extremely dangerous bill that would irrevocably harm the health of Kansas kids and communities. We have current vaccine requirements for a reason, and an already existing exemption process for childhood vaccines that works.

We honestly ask, why is SB 315 needed? What existing problem is it trying to address? We have public health-related requirements – like those associated with vaccines – for a reason. Infectious diseases do not care about people’s choices or beliefs. When these diseases spread, they put our most vulnerable – children too young to be vaccinated, those with medical conditions that prevent them from receiving certain vaccines, immunocompromised community members, and the elderly – at particular high risk for infection, hospitalization, life-long complications, and even death.

Businesses may require certain vaccines for workplace safety reasons or in a health care setting. Just one person opting out of a vaccine may jeopardize the entire workplace and the patients a health care worker cares for.

Vaccine requirements in child care centers keep parents at work and child care businesses open. Functional child care facilities and schools literally make Kansas work. And when vaccine-preventable disease outbreaks occur, they overwhelm our health systems and close businesses. Additionally, containing an outbreak after it has begun to spread in the community

costs millions of dollars.¹²

According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, “when immunization rates are high, herd immunity develops and limits the spread of the disease, which helps protect those who cannot be vaccinated.”¹³ Limiting disease is good for children, families, businesses, and the entire state. When even a few more people refuse to vaccinate their children, they put everyone in their community at risk of dangerous diseases. SB 315 would make it much easier for people to opt-out of vaccine requirements.

SB 315 would alter the current vaccine requirements and would jeopardize kids’ health. **We urge the Committee to keep Kansas kids and communities safe by opposing SB 315.**

Thank you for the opportunity to share our strong opposition to SB 315. Please do not hesitate to contact me at heather@kac.org if you have any questions.

¹ Pike, J., Leidner, A. J., & Gastañaduy, P. (2020). A review of measles outbreak cost estimates from the United States in the postelimination era (2004–2017): Estimates by perspective and cost type. *Clinical Infectious Diseases*, 71(6): 1568–1576. <https://doi.org/10.1093/cid/ciaa070>

² Pike, J., Melnick, A., Gastañaduy, P., Kay, M., Harbison, J., Leidner, A., Rice, S., Asato, K., Schwartz, L., & DeBolt, C. (2021). Societal costs of a measles outbreak. *Pediatrics*. 147(4). <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2020-027037>

³ National Conference of State Legislatures. (2017). Vaccination policies: requirements and exemptions for entering school. *NCSL Legisbrief*, 25(48):1-2.

Testimony in Opposition of Senate Bill 315

March 19, 2023

Honorable Senator Beverly Gossage and members of the Public Health and Welfare Committee,

My name is Paula Bunde. I am a nurse and mother.

I oppose SB 315 for the following reasons:

- The National School Nurse Association has a position statement that supports elimination of all exemptions except those necessary for valid medical contraindications.
- Vaccine requirements are determined by state health officials **based on scientific recommendations for immunizations** by the Advisory Committee on Immunizations (ACIP). **These requirements keep students and school staff safe by ensuring they are protected when at schools, where potential exposure to life-altering diseases is high. The ACIP is comprised of a variety of specialists from across the United States.** ACIP Current Membership Roster | CDC
- **Expanding exemptions is the first step in unraveling the critical work that has nearly eradicated diseases like polio, hepatitis, measles, mumps, and rubella.** Expanding exemptions by going against the majority of Kansans' wishes discounts evidence and turns back the clock by several decades, failing to protect our children from preventable diseases. Vaccine preventable diseases like Measles are making a comeback in the United States in communities where they were once eradicated.
- In a recent poll, 67% of Kansans reject the idea that we should add more wellness vaccine exemptions. Although 56% agree in principle that there should be a religious exemption, they believe the religious exemptions should be stricter in the following ways:
 - 61% want religious leader documentation
 - 65% want both parents to approve an exemption
 - 64% want there to be an annual exemption review
- **This bill takes away the freedom for private businesses to have vaccine requirements in the workplace and determine what is in the best interest of their employees and patrons.**
- **Meningococcal meningitis is very serious and can be deadly.** While the incidence is rare, infants, teens, and young adults have the highest rates of meningococcal disease in the U.S. In addition to the morbidity and mortality risks, the medical cost burden for patients with invasive meningococcal disease is significant. Vaccines are available that can help prevent meningococcal disease. Though there are many causes of meningitis beyond the ones covered in the vaccines, **the best prevention at this time is through vaccination.**

Please consider voting "NO" on SB 315. The process of the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) implementing the ACIP recommendations has historically been effective and efficient. The current process has proven to prevent outbreaks of childhood illnesses that could put a strain on childhood learning, as well as the economy from increased Kansas dollars spent on healthcare for both acute and chronic outcomes.

Sincerely,

Paula Bunde, MS Ed, RN, BSN
10401 W. 92nd Place
Overland Park, KS

I am submitting this testimony as a private citizen.

*Testimony for SB 315
Opposition*

Respectable Senate Public Health Committee:

I am submitting this testimony in opposition to SB 315. In 2022 Nurture KC found that 95% of Kansans believe that vaccinations against measles, polio and mumps are important to maintaining good health. We already have a vaccine exemption system for sincere religious exemptions; there is no need for additional legislation that could potentially place our children, schools and population in danger from a resurgence of these lethal illnesses.

Vaccines are safe and effective and there is strong agreement across partisan lines that wellness vaccines are beneficial.

I urge you to vote no on SB 315 and not alter immunization requirements.

Respectfully,

*Terry Busch RN, BSN, MSN, MSED
Johnson County Registered Nurse Educator, Retired*



SEDGWICK COUNTY
Health Department

Adrienne Byrne
Health Director

**Testimony by Adrienne Byrne, Sedgwick County Health Director to
Senate Committee on Public Health and Welfare
Written Opponent for SB 315 • March 21, 2023**

Chair Gossage and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 315 which makes several changes to vaccine exemptions and requirements. Sedgwick County Health Department's mission is *'To improve the health of our residents by preventing disease, promoting wellness and protecting the public from health threats.'*

Sedgwick County Health Department has multiple concerns with SB 315 and the negative impacts it could have:

- Section 1 modifies K.S.A. 2022 Supp. 44-663, shifting it from COVID-19 vaccine language to any vaccine in regards to the employer/employee relationship. This can be risky in the health-related fields where employees often work around and with immunocompromised individuals and certain vaccine requirements on staff help ensure the safety of clients.
- Section 2 modifies K.S.A. 65-508, installing a philosophical exemption to the religious exemption definition as it relates to child care facilities. Sedgwick County Health Department stands in opposition to expanding allowable vaccine exemptions. We feel the existing exemptions are sufficient and additional ways to opt-out places society at risk of preventable diseases by dropping our herd immunity below adequate levels.
- Section 3 modifies K.S.A. 72-6262, essentially doing what Section 2 does but for school settings (and we oppose for the aforementioned reason).
- SB 315 also repeals K.S.A. 76-761a, the law that requires colleges/universities to have policies/ procedures requiring all incoming students residing in student housing be vaccinated for meningitis. This change is extremely dangerous. The overall case-fatality ratio of meningococcal disease is 10-15% and as many as 20% of survivors have other impacts like limb loss, hearing loss, and neurologic damage¹.

Sedgwick County Health Department sees no redeeming aspects in SB 315 and opposes it in totality. We believe this bill, if enacted into law, will result in additional deaths and morbidity for Kansans, all via diseases that are vaccine preventable. As such, we ask the committee to not recommend SB 315 favorably for passage.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Adrienne Byrne
Adrienne Byrne, Health Director
Sedgwick County Health Department

¹CDC data on meningitis and the case-fatality rate and other impacts it can found at:
<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pubs/pinkbook/mening.html#Clinical>



Testimony in Opposition of Senate Bill 315

March 18, 2023

Honorable Senator Beverly Gossage and members of the Public Health and Welfare Committee,

My name is Mary Kathryn Carter (Katy). I am a nurse and a parent of two children who attended Kansas public schools, and grandparent of six children, five of whom who attend public schools (the sixth is not yet old enough to attend school).

I have been a school nurse in Kansas since 1998 and I am a member of the Kansas School Nurses Association (the State affiliate of the National Association of School Nurses NASN) since October 2013

Please vote "NO" on SB 315.

- It's unfortunate that our Governor, KDHE, and the CDC on a national level instituted and implemented policies that were unscientific, unnecessary, and an overreach of their constitutional authority during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- *HOWEVER, please don't equally over react in the opposite direction and eliminate the reasonable and prudent vaccine requirements that are in place currently for school attendance in Kansas for common childhood diseases = measles, mumps, rubella, varicella (chickenpox) tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis.*
- I do school immunization audits as a daily/weekly/monthly/yearly part of my job as a school nurse. I can tell you that I have never, in 24 years, questioned the sincerity of any religious exemption claimed by a parent on behalf of their child.
- NEVER make the COVID or HPV vaccines a school requirement. The COVID vaccine has made a joke of the religious exemption, however. I would advocate for the elimination of the religious exemption completely for school vaccine requirements. Make medical exemptions the only allowed exemption.
- *In the jam-packed, crowded school environment, childhood vaccines MUST REMAIN MANDATORY for attendance.*
- Parents who do not want their children to have vaccines do not have to vaccinate their children; they can legally home school their children. In the public setting, the vaccine requirements must be continued.
- Key findings from a statewide survey of 600 registered voters in Kansas, conducted January 27-February 3, 2022. Margin of error is +/- 4.0%:
 - 1) More than 9-in-10 Kansas voters (95%) believe taking vaccines for diseases like measles, mumps and polio is extremely or very important to maintaining good health. In fact, when it comes to maintaining good health, a larger share of Kansas voters believe it is more important to get wellness vaccines than it is to get an annual checkup at the doctor (94%).
 - 2. Fully 95% of Kansas voters believe wellness vaccines are a good thing, including 77% who say they are a very good thing. And voters across Kansas strongly trust the safety and efficacy of wellness vaccines. Consider: > More than 9-in-10 of Kansas voters believes wellness vaccines are completely/mostly safe, including strong majorities of Republicans (96%), Independents (95%) and Democrats (98%) > More than 9-in-10 of Kansas voters believes wellness vaccines are completely/mostly effective, including strong majorities of Republicans (97%), Independents (95%) and Democrats (100%)

Sincerely,

Katy Carter, BSN RN NCSN
1911 N. Valleyview, Wichita, KS 67212

eMAIL: Katycarter353@gmail.com
316-722-5236



To: Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee

From: Rachelle Colombo
Executive Director

Date: March 21, 2023

Re: SB 315; relating to vaccinations

The Kansas Medical Society appreciates the opportunity to submit comments today in opposition to the passage of SB 315, broadening exemptions from required vaccinations. Kansas physicians respect and appreciate the legislature's role in enacting laws ensuring the health, safety and prosperity of Kansans, as they have done with regard to childhood immunizations regulated by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE). This process ensures an evidence-based approach to protecting the health of all Kansans.

Vaccines are safe and given to millions of children each year. Side effects are generally minor and temporary; serious reactions are very rare. The United States vaccine safety program closely and constantly monitors the safety of vaccines. Vaccinations have significantly decreased rates of vaccine-preventable diseases and are the single most impactful achievement in public health.

Current law allows medical and religious exemptions from required vaccinations to ensure that appropriate accommodations are made for religious beliefs and medical necessities. However, broadening these exemptions to include the "sincerely held theistic and non-theistic beliefs" of parents will result in the increase of preventable infectious diseases that are particularly devastating for our most vulnerable. There is no debate about the effectiveness of vaccinations in eradicating infectious diseases common in other parts of the world. Americans no longer suffer from widespread outbreaks of measles, hepatitis, polio and other preventable diseases that plague the unvaccinated.

SB 315 allows individuals to put their opinions and preferences ahead of the health and safety of the communities in which they live. This approach is not promoted in other areas where individuals disagree with evidence and impact to the public. We have requirements for car seats, seat belts, speed limits, restrictions on smoking and drinking and how roads and bridges are built to ensure the collective safety of our communities despite our personal preferences.

We oppose SB 315 and respectfully request your unfavorable consideration of the measure. Thank you.



KANSAS ACADEMY OF
FAMILY PHYSICIANS
CARING FOR KANSANS

Testimony: SB 315 – Opponent
Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee
March 21, 2023
Submitted by: Deb Doubek, MD, FAAFP (written only)

Chair Gossage and members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Kansas Academy of Family Physicians (KAFP), this written testimony **is submitted in opposition to SB 315**. The KAFP represents nearly 2,000 family physicians, residents and medical students across our state. Our mission is to support and serve family physicians working to advance the health of all Kansans.

Vaccinations are among the greatest achievements in public health. Vaccinations have significantly decreased rates of vaccine-preventable diseases, protecting the lives and health of Kansans from serious diseases. Vaccines are safe and effective. The United States vaccine safety program closely and constantly monitors the safety of all vaccines.

The Americans with Disabilities Act, as well as Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, already protect employees in the areas of medical and religion exemption. SB 315 will serve to further divide our state on the topic of vaccines and public health and safety. Further, this bill encourages litigious attitudes towards employers, which will hurt the small businesses in Kansas, including many family physician practices. Employers have the right to protect their employees and customers and establish employee qualifications, which can include health and safety standards. In fact, employers in our state have an obligation to provide a safe workplace for their employees and the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission allows companies to require influenza and other vaccines.

Further, with regards to exemptions of childcare centers, primary and secondary educational institutions and college campuses, SB 315 risks Kansas' ability to respond to the best scientific recommendations for immunizations, as set forth by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), to protect our children from vaccine-preventable diseases. Non-medically necessary exemptions undermine the years of work done in Kansas to protect our citizens from communicable and sometimes deadly, disease.

Vaccines are safe and given to millions of children and adults each year. Side effects are generally minor and temporary; serious reactions are very rare. The United States vaccine safety program closely and constantly monitors the safety of vaccines. Vaccinations have significantly decreased rates of vaccine-preventable diseases and are the single most impactful achievement in public health.

As family physicians, we work to ensure our patients and the communities we serve are healthy and safe. The relationships we have with our patients allows for open dialog and the ability for patients to voice their medical concerns of any vaccination. While we support appropriately implemented medical exemptions, the KAFP is opposed to non-medical exemptions because of the risk of lowering overall vaccination rates across the state and impacting those in our communities that are medically fragile or are too young to be vaccinated. Vaccinating for preventable diseases contributes significantly to lowering healthcare costs, decreased time off work for employees and increased herd immunity for our most vulnerable populations.

Thank you for the opportunity to present our concern. We urge this committee **to oppose SB 315**.

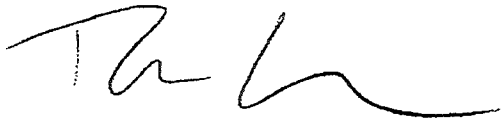
Testimony for SB 315
Opponent

Senate Public Health Committee:

I am submitting this testimony in opposition to SB 315. This bill has the potential to put our children, schools and general public in extreme danger. Vaccines are safe and effective and there is strong agreement across partisan lines that wellness vaccines are beneficial. In fact, Nurture KC found in 2022 that 95% of Kansans believe vaccinations against diseases like measles, polio and mumps are important for maintaining good health.

I urge you to vote no on SB 315 and not alter immunization requirements.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tai Elder', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Tai Elder, PharmD, BCCCP
Emergency Medicine/Critical Care Specialist
Via Christi Health, Inc.

929 N. St. Francis, Wichita, KS 67214
T: 316-777-8518

Testimony for SB 315
Opponent

Senate Public Health Committee:

I am submitting this testimony in opposition to SB 315. This bill has the potential to put our children, schools, and general public in extreme danger. Vaccines are safe and effective and there is strong agreement across partisan lines that wellness vaccines are beneficial. In fact, Nurture KC found in 2022 that 95% of Kansans believe vaccinations against diseases like measles, polio, and mumps is important for maintaining good health. The CDC estimates that vaccinations will prevent more than 21 million hospitalizations and 730,000 deaths among children born in the last 20 years.

I urge you to vote no on SB 315 and not alter immunization requirements.

Regards,

Dr. Katelyn Falk, MD
Pittsburg, KS

Testimony for SB314

Opponent

Senate Public Health Committee:

I submit this testimony in opposition of SB315. This bill has the potential to put our children, schools and the general public at high risk of illness or death. As a nurse, I have seen that vaccinations are safe and effective. A vast majority of Kansans agree that vaccinations like measles, mumps and rubella are an important part of maintaining good health.

I urge you to vote no on SB315 and not to alter immunization requirements.

Regards,

Nina Fricke, Private citizen

Bucyrus, KS 66013

SB 315 - "Requiring child care facilities, elementary, secondary and postsecondary educational institutions and employers to grant exemptions from vaccine requirements without inquiring into the sincerity of the request and repealing the meningitis vaccine requirement to live in student housing."

Written only opponent testimony
March 19, 2023

Chair Gossage, Vice Chair Erickson, Ranking Member Pettey, and members of the Senate Public Health Committee:

This is a dangerous policy proposal and reckless piece of legislation. Our kids and communities must continue to be protected from serious communicable diseases. There is no reason for measles, mumps, rubella, and polio to be a threat in this country again. Because of the success of vaccines, many in the public have never seen how devastating and deadly these illnesses can be. Do not set us on a course that will expose children to needless suffering, disability or death.

Just hearing this and similar bills forwards a false perception to the public that vaccines are not safe. Vaccines have been used safely for many decades spanning several generations. Stop sending messages to the contrary.

We already have appropriate exemptions available and do not need to expand on those. Please vote no on SB 315.

Best Regards,

Pat Gouger
Private Citizen
Overland Park KS



Unified Government Public Health Department

619 Ann Avenue, Kansas City, KS 66101-3038

Phone (913) 573-8855

wycokck.org/health

Opponent Testimony :: SB315

Elizabeth Groenweghe with the Unified Government of Wyandotte County/Kansas City, KS Public Health Department

Senate Committee on Public Health and Welfare

March 20, 2023

Chair Gossage and Members of the Committee

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 315 regarding immunization requirements in the state of Kansas. I am the Chief Epidemiologist at the Unified Government Public Health Department of Wyandotte County and Kansas City, KS. Stopping the spread of infectious diseases in Wyandotte County is one of my key job duties and passing SB 315 would limit the ability to do that and also put vulnerable communities at risk.

SB 315 proposes to make a number of harmful changes to immunization requirements in Kansas. Section 1 would remove any kind of immunization requirements for employees, including employees in high-risk settings such as healthcare. This would put patients with immunocompromising conditions at risk in particular. Section 2 modifies existing law to allow philosophical immunization exemptions for childcare center attendees, essentially ending immunization requirements in childcare centers. Section 3 proposes to do the same in K-12 schools. Both of these changes would put babies, infants, and young children at serious risk for disease, complications, and death. Finally, this bill would repeal the meningitis vaccination requirement for students living in college/university housing. All these changes would have significant public health impacts and make stopping the spread of infectious diseases in Kansas more challenging.

Vaccinations are one of the greatest public health achievements and have had a profound impact on reducing illness, death and disability in the United States, particularly among children. One study found that routine childhood immunizations prevent approximately 20 million cases of disease, 42,000 early deaths, and \$13.5 billion in healthcare costs (<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/24590750/>). Another study found that vaccines are highly effective at preventing diseases in childhood—annually, over 3 million measles cases are averted, over 2 million pertussis cases, and over 2 million mumps cases (<https://publications.aap.org/pediatrics/article/150/3/e2021056013/188495/Impact-of-Routine-Childhood-Immunization-in?autologincheck=redirected>). There is no doubt that vaccines have and continue to have a profound impact on the public's health.

This bill sets out to make vaccinations essentially optional in many settings including workplaces, schools, and daycares by allowing individuals and parents to opt out for any philosophical reason “without inquiring into the sincerity of the request.” This will give those opposed to vaccination a wider avenue to opt out of them and will also make not vaccinating their children the easier choice for busy parents. It can be easy for a busy parent to fall behind on their child's vaccination schedule and SB 315 would make it easier for parents not opposed to vaccination to fall behind unintentionally. Vaccination



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Phone (913) 573-8855

wycokck.org/health

requirements for daycares and schools are essential to helping make sure parents keep their children up to date and healthy.

Finally, it is important I call out the huge dangers of repealing the meningitis vaccination requirement in colleges. Meningitis is one of the most dangerous vaccine-preventable diseases. The disease is estimated to have a 10-15% case fatality rate—that means that 1 in 10 people with the disease will die. In addition, as many as 20% of those who survive the disease will have profound impacts such as limb loss, hearing loss and neurological damage—leading to lifelong disability (<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pubs/pinkbook/mening.html#Clinical>). College housing is one of the settings where meningitis spreads most easily due to close living quarters. Repealing the vaccination requirement in this setting is going to put hundreds of thousands of young adults in Kansas at risk.

Vaccinations are one of our greatest achievements in medicine and continue to prevent many cases of illness, disability, and death in Kansas. Any efforts to remove vaccination requirements as outlined in SB 315 would be harmful to Kansans, especially young children. I oppose the entirety of SB 315 and ask that the committee not recommend it for passage.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Groenweghe

Chief Epidemiologist and Epidemiology/Tuberculosis Program Manager, Unified Government Public Health Department

Testimony in Opposition of Senate Bill 315

March 17, 2023

Honorable Senator Beverly Gossage and members of the Public Health and Welfare Committee,

My name is Ronda Hutchinson. I am a pediatric nurse and a mom. I have been a school nurse for 20 years. I have seen how disease spreads in schools amongst the students and staff. I have seen staff shortages due to disease. Staff and student attendance is imperative to learning. I have seen students miss 21 days of school after being exposed to varicella because they have not been vaccinated. I have seen students take home vaccine preventable diseases to their infant siblings that are too young to get vaccinated. I have seen students take home vaccine preventable diseases to elderly grandparents who are caring for them.

I oppose SB 315 for the following additional reasons:

- The National School Nurse Association has a position statement that supports elimination of all exemptions except those necessary for valid medical contraindications.
- Vaccine requirements are determined by state health officials **based on scientific recommendations for immunizations** by the Advisory Committee on Immunizations (ACIP). These requirements keep students and school staff safe by ensuring they are protected when at schools, where potential exposure to life-altering diseases is high. The ACIP is comprised of a variety of specialists from across the United States. ACIP Current Membership Roster | CDC
- **Expanding exemptions is the first step in unraveling the critical work that has nearly eradicated diseases like polio, hepatitis, measles, mumps, and rubella.** Expanding exemptions by going against the majority of Kansans' wishes discounts evidence and turns back the clock by several decades, failing to protect our children from preventable diseases. Vaccine preventable diseases like Measles are making a comeback in the United States in communities where they were once eradicated.
- In a recent poll, 67% of Kansans reject the idea that we should add more wellness vaccine exemptions. Although **56% agree in principle that there should be a religious exemption, they believe the religious exemptions should be stricter** in the following ways:
 - 61% want religious leader documentation
 - 65% want both parents to approve an exemption
 - 64% want there to be an annual exemption review
- **This bill takes away the freedom for private businesses to have vaccine requirements in the workplace** and determine what is in the best interest of their employees and patrons. I have seen elderly residence of nursing home catch diseases from the staff.
- **Meningococcal meningitis is very serious and can be deadly.** While the incidence is rare, infants, teens, and young adults have the highest rates of meningococcal disease in the U.S. In addition to the morbidity and mortality risks, the medical cost burden for patients with invasive meningococcal disease is significant. Vaccines

are available that can help prevent meningococcal disease. Though there are many causes of meningitis beyond the ones covered in the vaccines, **the best prevention at this time is through vaccination.**

Please consider voting "NO" on SB 315. The process of the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) implementing the ACIP recommendations has historically been effective and efficient. The current process has proven to prevent outbreaks of childhood illnesses that could put a strain on childhood learning, as well as the economy from increased Kansas dollars spent on healthcare for both acute and chronic outcomes.

Sincerely,

Ronda Hutchinson, BSN, RN
10004 W. 20th St. N
Wichita, KS 67212

*Testimony for SB 315
Opponent*

To Senate Public Health Committee:

I am submitting this testimony in opposition to SB 315. This bill has the potential to put our children, schools and general public in extreme danger from contagious diseases.

Vaccines are safe and effective and there is strong agreement across partisan lines that wellness vaccines are beneficial. In fact, Nurture KC found in 2022 that 95% of Kansans believe vaccinations against diseases like measles, polio and mumps are important for protecting our children and actually our entire population. Most of us are not old enough to remember past history when contagious diseases wiped out entire communities, so some people now don't realize that without "herd immunity" these diseases can return.

Individual freedom is the mantra of today, but one person's freedom from getting vaccinated takes away other people's freedom from preventable diseases. Stopping some of these diseases of the "past" requires group cooperation and belief that other lives are worth as much as our own.

I urge you to vote no on SB 315 and not alter immunization requirements.

*Regards,
Corliss & Joe Jacobs
Citizens of USA and KS
20745 College Blvd
Olathe, KS 66061*

March 19, 2023

Testimony to the Senate Public Health Committee

NAME: Molly Keppler

TITLE: Kansas Citizen

EMAIL ADDRESS: mollyewalsh@gmail.com

BILL NUMBER: SB 315

PROPONENT, OPPONENT, or NEUTRAL: Opponent

ORAL or WRITTEN ONLY TESTIMONY: Written Only

Dear Chair & members of the committee,

I am writing to voice my opposition to bill SB 315. This bill has the potential to put our children, schools, and general public in extreme danger. Vaccines are safe and effective and there is strong agreement across partisan lines that wellness vaccines are beneficial. Our medical community strongly supports wellness vaccines and agrees that they are necessary for public health and wellness. There are already processes in place for individuals to seek an exemption from the vaccination requirement for qualifying medical and religious reasons. These current exemption processes balance the health and religious beliefs of the individual person with the greater public health goals. To expand upon those exemptions would be to go beyond what has been settled state and federal law for many years and would jeopardize public health on the tail of the greatest public health crisis of my lifetime.

Please vote no on SB 315 and keep the current immunization requirements in place.

Molly Keppler
Leawood, KS

*Testimony for SB 315
Opponent
Written Only Testimony*

Senate Public Health Committee:

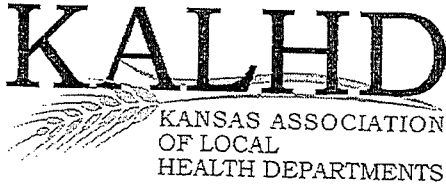
I am submitting this testimony in opposition to SB 315. This bill has the potential to put our children, schools, and the public in extreme danger.

Vaccine requirements should be managed and enforced by the federal, state, and local medical and public health organizations that have experience understanding and executing communicable disease identification and control best practices. The legislature is not the appropriate organization to regulate vaccinations.

Vaccines are safe and effective, and there is strong agreement across partisan lines that wellness vaccines are beneficial. In fact, Nurture KC found in 2022 that 95% of Kansans believe vaccinations against diseases like measles, polio, and mumps are important for maintaining good health.

I urge you to vote no on SB 315 and not alter immunization requirements.

*Regards,
Deborah Kitchin
Leawood, Kansas*



Healthy People Build Strong Communities

Kansas Association of Local Health Departments
715 SW 10th Avenue
Topeka, KS 66612
Phone: 785-271-8391
www.kalhd.org

Testimony by Dennis Kriesel with the Kansas Association of Local Health Departments (KALHD) to

Senate Committee on Public Health and Welfare

Written Opponent for SB 315 • March 21, 2023

Chair Gossage and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 315 which makes several changes to vaccine exemptions and requirements. KALHD is a nonprofit association dedicated to strengthening local health departments for the purpose of improving and protecting the health of all Kansans.

KALHD has multiple concerns with SB 315 and the negative impacts it could have:

- Section 1 modifies K.S.A. 2022 Supp. 44-663, shifting it from COVID-19 vaccine language to any vaccine in regards to the employer/employee relationship. This can be risky in the health-related fields where employees often work around and with immunocompromised individuals and certain vaccine requirements on staff help ensure the safety of clients.
- Section 2 modifies K.S.A. 65-508, installing a philosophical exemption to the religious exemption definition as it relates to child care facilities. KALHD stands in opposition to expanding allowable vaccine exemptions. We feel the existing exemptions are sufficient and additional ways to opt-out places society at risk of preventable diseases by dropping our herd immunity below adequate levels.
- Section 3 modifies K.S.A. 72-6262, essentially doing what Section 2 does but for school settings (and we oppose for the aforementioned reason).
- SB 315 also repeals K.S.A. 76-761a, the law that requires colleges/universities to have policies/procedures requiring all incoming students residing in student housing be vaccinated for meningitis. This change is extremely dangerous. The overall case-fatality ratio of meningococcal disease is 10-15% and as many as 20% of survivors have other impacts like limb loss, hearing loss, and neurologic damage¹.

KALHD sees no redeeming aspects in SB 315 and opposes it in totality. We believe this bill, if enacted into law, will result in additional deaths and morbidity for Kansans, all via diseases that are vaccine preventable. As such, we ask the committee to not recommend SB 315 favorably for passage.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Dennis Kriesel

Executive Director, Kansas Association of Local Health Departments

¹ CDC data on meningitis and the case-fatality rate and other impacts can be found at:
<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pubs/pinkbook/mening.html#Clinical>

From: [Mark Levin](#)
To: [Donola Fairbanks](#)
Subject: Testimony for SB 31
Date: Sunday, March 19, 2023 4:18:18 PM

EXTERNAL: This email originated from outside the organization. Do not click any links or open any attachments unless you trust the sender and know the content is safe.

Testimony for SB 315

Opponent

Senate Public Health Committee:

I am submitting this testimony in opposition to SB 315. Jewish religious tradition obligates us to seek health and the health of our communities. Not only must we choose the path that chooses life for ourselves, but we also are obligated to choose to avoid endangering the communities in which we live.

SB 315 will result in a higher incidence of serious illness. Vaccines are safe and effective and there is strong agreement across partisan lines that wellness vaccines are beneficial. In fact, 95% of Kansans believe vaccinations against diseases like measles, polio and mumps are important for maintaining good health.

While individual rights are important, they do not allow us to choose those options which will increase illness rates and even death among the members of our community. A higher principle is preserving life and health. Permitting opting out of proven vaccines for children and adults is contrary to religious freedom and our religious tradition.

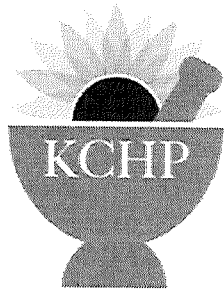
I urge you to vote no on SB 315 and not alter immunization requirements.

Regards,

Rabbi Dr. Mark H. Levin

Founding Rabbi, Congregation Beth Torah

Overland Park, Ks



**Kansas Council
of Health-System Pharmacy**

**Testimony for Senate Bill 315
Kansas Senate Public Health Committee
Jeff Little, PharmD, MPH, BCPS, FACHE, FASHP, FKCHP
March 21st, 2023**

Chairman Gossage and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of the Kansas Council of Health-System Pharmacy (KCHP). KCHP is committed to advancing public health by promoting the safe and appropriate use of medications through advocacy and education. I am a Past President of KCHP in addition to being a licensed pharmacist in Kansas for fifteen years. I have two children in the Kansas public school system, one of which has a chronic medical condition. My mother also is a Kansas resident and is immune compromised because of her medication regimen.

I am testifying in opposition to Senate Bill 315. First of all, vaccinations are SAFE, EFFECTIVE, highly scrutinized, and are one of the most important public health interventions in the history of humanity.

Secondly, medical and religious exemptions already exist in KS state law. Further loosening requirements for exemptions will only serve to increase risk and healthcare related costs for our healthcare and education systems. More than 60% of Kansans oppose or strongly oppose loosening restrictions on routine vaccinations for children (Kansas Statewide Survey: Attitudes Toward Vaccines – January 27-February 3, 2022).

Thirdly, many health systems which employ our members have had vaccination requirements for years to protect patients and the healthcare workers themselves. Immunocompromised patients unable to protect themselves directly benefit from these requirements, but they also help to keep our health systems staffed and beds available. With the shortages of healthcare workers currently seen in health systems across the state, this has never been more important.

As a pharmacist, as a parent, and as a Kansan, I strongly encourage your opposition to SB 315.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this harmful legislation.

Jeff Little, PharmD, MPH, BCPS, FACHE, FASHP, FKCHP
KCHP Past President

March 18, 2023

Testimony to the Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee

NAME: **Leslie D. Mark**

TITLE: **Kansas Citizen / Voter**

EMAIL ADDRESS: **ldmark61@gmail.com**

BILL NUMBER: **SB315, Requiring child care facilities, elementary, secondary and postsecondary educational institutions and employers to grant exemptions from vaccine requirements without inquiring into the sincerity of the request and repealing the meningitis vaccine requirement to live in student housing.**

PROPONENT, OPPONENT, or NEUTRAL: **Opponent**

ORAL or WRITTEN ONLY TESTIMONY: **Written Only**

Dear Chair Gossage & Members of the Committee,

SB 315 aims to codify total resistance to vaccine mandates — well beyond Covid-19 immunizations. This startling development carries vast implications for the future of public health. I ask, in all seriousness, Sen. Gossage, what exactly is your vision for a future Kansas?

SB 315 as written would make any child or adult free to ask and receive exemption from all vaccinations for ANY reason — at work, childcare, or K-12 schools. Organizations would be prohibited from questioning people about their “sincerely held beliefs” and would even go so far as to remove the lifesaving meningitis vaccine requirement to live in KS college student housing! So again, I ask, what future do you envision for Kansas in this scenario?

One of the greatest achievements in human history has been the decline in infant and child mortality rates. Across long historical sampling, an average 25% of infants died in their first year of life; about half died as children. Notably, researchers have seen very similar mortality rates for children across a wide range of 43 historical cultures — from Ancient Rome and Ancient Greece to the pre-Columbian Americas, from Medieval Japan to Medieval England, and during the European Renaissance as well as in Imperial China — the statistic remained static: one in four newborns died in the first year of life and one of two died in childhood.

The main reason why billions of children died was recurring epidemics. No matter where or when they were born, half died as children from influenza, measles, cholera, diphtheria, the bubonic plague, and smallpox. Large parts of the adult population were also killed. Within just a few years the Black Death plague killed half of Europe's population. The epidemics (smallpox, measles, typhus and others) that the colonialists brought with them from Europe to the Americas often killed an even larger share of the population.

The world today is obviously very different. Infectious diseases are the cause of fewer than 1-in-6 deaths, and as the world made progress against the microbes our lives became much longer. The global average life expectancy is now 73 years after life expectancy doubled in every world region. Why? Because of careful development of vaccines and application of public health policies across the globe. SB 315 is reckless law and guarantees a return to unjustifiable illnesses and death. VOTE NO on SB 315.

Leslie D. Mark

Mission Hills, HD 25 / Sen 7

SB 315 testimony 2023

Andy Marso
University of Kansas alum
Meningitis survivor

Re: Testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 315

All of SB 315 is ill-advised, pro-disease legislation, but I will focus my remarks on the section that would end the rule that students at Kansas colleges who live on campus receive a vaccine for bacterial meningitis.

In 2004 I was a senior at the University of Kansas, living on campus, when I contracted bacterial meningitis. I was hospitalized for 140 days, including a month in intensive care, nearly died and had parts of all four of my limbs amputated. I was lucky. Even with treatment, about 15% of people who get meningococcal disease like I did do not survive.¹ That's a fatality rate roughly 10 times greater than COVID-19 and 100 times greater than the flu. And it happens fast — most meningitis deaths occur within 24 hours of diagnosis.² Among those who survive meningococcal disease, nearly 20% suffer permanent injury, like me.

The greater KU community was also lucky in my case. *Neisseria meningitidis*, the germ that caused my disease, spreads through close contact with others. This makes college campuses, where each person is often in contact with hundreds of others on a daily basis, fertile ground for outbreaks with multiple infections. Between 2013 and 2018, 10 university-based meningitis outbreaks caused at least 39 infections and two deaths.³ In my case, a swift and comprehensive contact tracing effort by KU and local health officials prevented an outbreak. Dozens of people who had been near me before I fell ill got preventative antibiotics to kill off any *Neisseria meningitidis* inside them before it became problematic.

While traditionally most outbreaks on college campuses were caused by serogroup C meningitis, all 10 of the above outbreaks were caused by serogroup B. That's because a new vaccine that prevents serogroup C and three other types of bacterial meningitis was approved in 2005. It has since become widely used and cases of meningitis caused by those groups have fallen to near zero. This is the vaccine that college students in Kansas — and many other states⁴ — are currently required to get. A forward-thinking legislature would probably consider whether to also require a newer vaccine (approved in 2013) that prevents serogroup B. But recent history has shown that most colleges unfortunately only start requiring that shot AFTER a serogroup B meningitis outbreak has hit their campus and killed or maimed students.

While I understand that the current Kansas legislature is unlikely to even consider requiring college students to receive the meningitis B vaccine, it seems extremely ill-advised to invite the other meningitis serogroups back to campus when the current vaccination rule has been quite successful at keeping them out. It's an incredibly deadly disease, after all, and outbreaks are very disruptive to universities and their

surrounding communities. Practically speaking, there's no upside for the state in passing this bill and there's potentially some pretty serious downsides: unnecessary disease, injury, and death.

Sincerely,



References

1. MacNeil JR, Blain AE, Wang X, Cohn AC. Current Epidemiology and Trends in Meningococcal Disease — United States, 1996-2015. *Clin Infect Dis*. 2018;66(8): 1276-1281.

<https://academic.oup.com/cid/article/66/8/1276/4605281>

2. Beebejaun K, Parikh SR, Campbell H, et al. Invasive meningococcal disease: Timing and cause of death in England, 2008-2015. *J Infect*. 2020;80(3): 286-290.

[https://www.journalofinfection.com/article/S0163-4453\(19\)30380-9/fulltext](https://www.journalofinfection.com/article/S0163-4453(19)30380-9/fulltext)

3. Soeters HM, McNamara LA, Blain AE, et al. University-based outbreaks of meningococcal disease caused by serogroup B, United States, 2013-2018. *Emerg Infect Dis*. 2019;25(3):434-440.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6390773/>

4. State vaccine requirements for college entry. National Conference of State Legislatures. Updated Sept. 1, 2021.

<https://www.ncsl.org/health/state-vaccine-requirements-for-college-entry>

Oppose SB 315, regarding childhood vaccine exemptions
Written Testimony to Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee
March 21, 2023

Honorable Senator Beverly Gossage and members of the Public Health and Welfare Committee,

Thank you for considering my testimony **opposing SB 315**. My name is Kimberly Martin, and I am a public-school elementary nurse in a Johnson County district. My school is a Title 1, English Language Learning program school. My students are 85% free and reduced lunch and very racially diverse. We have a majority minority population. Only 15.5% of my students are White.

I oppose SB 315 because we need the childhood vaccine mandates to be strong to ensure herd immunity for our most vulnerable students. I had a student who was in kindergarten in the 2019-2020 school year who could not be vaccinated while undergoing treatments for his leukemia. He was wearing a mask to school before anyone knew a pandemic was coming at the end of the year. He needed to be protected from once common vaccine preventable illnesses like chicken pox, measles, and pertussis. If anyone in his classroom had come down with a vaccine preventable illness, it could have killed this student. It would also require him to miss out on being in school while waiting for an outbreak to be over. That year, there was a measles outbreak in another Johnson County city, so this was not an unheard-of possibility. His parents could not wait until the day his treatments would be over and he could get vaccinated again. Most students with medical exemptions, have a temporary condition, that eventually will allow them to get vaccinated again, and those parents long for that day. Until then, they must rely on the rest of the population to do the right thing for society and get fully vaccinated. We know that these days, increasing numbers of people don't follow the well-established science about vaccine safety, and do not consider other people's children like this student. So that is very scary for parents of children with cancer.

I also had a staff member who had a bone marrow transplant for non-Hodgkin's lymphoma and had to be revaccinated when her treatments were over, as bone marrow transplants completely erase prior vaccine and naturally induced immunity. She was also afraid of catching a vaccine preventable illness if not enough students in our community were fully vaccinated thus providing proper herd immunity. She has since had time to get fully vaccinated again, but she had to have the entire childhood series of vaccines as an adult.

I oppose SB 315 for the following reasons:

- The National School Nurse Association has a [position statement](#) that supports elimination of all exemptions except those necessary for valid medical contraindications.
- Vaccine requirements are determined by state health officials **based on scientific recommendations for immunizations** by the Advisory Committee on Immunizations (ACIP). **The ACIP is comprised of a variety of specialists from across the United States.** [ACIP Current Membership Roster | CDC](#)
- **Expanding exemptions is the first step in unraveling the critical work that has nearly eradicated diseases like polio, hepatitis, measles, mumps, and rubella.** Expanding exemptions by going against the majority of Kansans' wishes discounts evidence and turns back the clock by several decades, failing to protect our children from preventable diseases.
- [In a recent poll](#), **67% of Kansans reject the idea that we should add more wellness vaccine exemptions.** Although 56% agree in principle that there should be a religious exemption, they believe the religious exemptions should be stricter in the following ways:
 - 61% want religious leader documentation
 - 65% want both parents to approve an exemption
 - 64% want there to be an annual exemption review

Please vote "NO" on SB 315. The process of the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) implementing the ACIP recommendations has historically been effective and efficient. The current process has proven to prevent outbreaks of childhood illnesses that could put a strain on childhood learning, as well as the economy from increased Kansas dollars spent on healthcare for both acute and chronic outcomes.

Kimberly Martin, RN, MEd, BSN, Overland Park, Kansas

Testimony on SB 315
Opponent

March 18, 2023
Senate Public Health Committee

I am submitting this testimony in opposition to SB 315.

The requirement that public school children be immunized for common childhood diseases has become an issue in the Kansas Legislature. Childhood diseases such as measles and polio are highly transmissible. Since some children do not respond to immunizations for medical reasons and no vaccines are 100% effective, a very high level of immunization in the population (over 90%) is required to prevent such infections. That is why Kansas requires immunization for childhood diseases. Exemptions from this requirement are already allowed for religions.

Over one hundred years ago, smallpox was common in the US. Vaccination against smallpox became required in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Opposition to the requirement arose and ended up at the Supreme Court. In 1905, the Supreme Court ruled that considering the minimal inconvenience and low risk from vaccination, the greater benefit to public health outweighed the right to personal autonomy. The majority opinion held:

“There are manifold restraints to which every person is necessarily subject for the common good. On any other basis, organized society could not exist with safety to its members. Society based on the rule that each one is a law unto himself would soon be confronted with disorder and anarchy.”

It is hard to argue with the logic of the Supreme Court. Allowing exemptions from childhood vaccine requirements, beyond those for religions, could lead to levels of immunization too low to prevent epidemics of previously controlled childhood diseases. This would threaten the major accomplishments of the public health community over the last century. The issue of exemptions should be resolved by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment not by ad hoc legislation such as SB 315.

Michael R. Miller, MD
Private Citizen
Roeland Park

...

To: Donola Fairbanks
Donola.fairbanks@senate.ks.gov

From: Grace S. Mitchell, MD, MBA
5616 Aberdeen Road
Fairway, KS 66205
grace.mitchell@alumni.tufts.edu

March 18, 2023

Dear Ms. Fairbanks,

I am submitting this testimony in **opposition** to SB 315. I am a board-certified pediatric radiologist and am deeply disturbed with this bill. This bill could put children, school workers, and the general public in danger if passed.

Vaccines are safe and highly effective at preventing many dangerous illnesses. This has been proven many times in many well-researched and rigorous academic studies. Moreover, Nurture KC found in 2022 that 95% of Kansans believe vaccinations for preventable diseases such as measles, mumps, and polio are important.

I strongly urge you to vote NO to SB 315, and please maintain immunization requirements.

Thank you very much.

Respectfully,



Grace S. Mitchell, MD, MBA
Pediatric Radiologist
Kansas private citizen



Written Opposition Testimony of the **Kansas Public Health Association** to the
Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee
SB 315 | March 21, 2023

Chairwoman Gossage and members of the committee:

Thank you for allowing the Kansas Public Health Association (KPHA) to provide written opposition testimony on SB 315, which would require childcare facilities, secondary and postsecondary educational institutions, and employers to grant exceptions from vaccine requirements as well as repeal the meningitis vaccine requirement to live in student housing.

As an association of public health practitioners, professionals, and advocates in Kansas, we support vaccinations as a cost-effective disease preventative measure. Vaccine exemptions erode the ability of vaccinations to work effectively at preventing disease by eliminating herd immunity, which protects those who cannot get vaccinated. By adding additional exemptions, we are giving deadly infectious diseases an opportunity to re-enter our communities. For example, because of increased vaccine exemptions, Kansas suffered the worse measles outbreak it had had since the 1990s in 2018, over 22 people were infected with this deadly, yet preventable disease.

In addition, SB 315 would repeal KS Statute 76-761a, which requires a meningitis vaccination to live in student housing at Kansas universities. Repealing this statute would put many Kansas university students at risk of developing this deadly disease. KPHA supports the current process the Kansas Department of Health and Environment has in place for approving vaccinations.

SB 315 in its entirety sets a dangerous precedent for Kansas. The Kansas Public Health Association encourages the committee to vote no on SB 315.

Respectfully submitted,

Shelby Ostrom
Policy Chair, Kansas Public Health Association
ShelbyOstrom13@gmail.com
913-909-7197

KPHA is a professional association for Kansas public health practitioners, professionals, and advocates. As a voice for public health, KPHA provides a forum for individuals and organizations to work collectively to assure conditions in which Kansans' lives will be healthy. (This position reflects the collective position of association members through the action of the Board of Directors and may not necessarily reflect the views of each KPHA member's employer.)

Testimony for SB 315
Opponent
Written Only

Senate Public Health Committee

I am submitting this testimony in opposition to SB 315. This bill has the potential to put our children, schools, and the general public in extreme danger. Vaccines are safe and effective and beneficial. In fact, vaccines save lives! How tragic for a child to die or be permanently damaged by a disease that could so easily have been prevented. Failing to have children vaccinated can have serious consequences for those children and for others around them, especially the immune-compromised.

I urge you to vote no on SB 315 and do not alter immunization requirements.

Regards,

Angela Schieferecke
Private Citizen

Testimony in Opposition of Senate Bill 315

March 17, 2023

Honorable Senator Beverly Gossage and members of the Public Health and Welfare Committee,

My name is Beth Schutte. I am a nurse, mom, and health advocate.

I oppose SB 315 for the following reasons

- The National School Nurse Association has a position statement that supports elimination of all exemptions except those necessary for valid medical contraindications.
- Vaccine requirements are determined by state health officials **based on scientific recommendations for immunizations** by the Advisory Committee on Immunizations (ACIP). These requirements keep students and school staff safe by ensuring they are protected when at schools, where potential exposure to life-altering diseases is high. The ACIP is comprised of a variety of specialists from across the United States. ACIP Current Membership Roster | CDC
- **Expanding exemptions is the first step in unraveling the critical work that has nearly eradicated diseases like polio, hepatitis, measles, mumps, and rubella.** Expanding exemptions by going against the majority of Kansans' wishes discounts evidence and turns back the clock by several decades, failing to protect our children from preventable diseases. Vaccine preventable diseases like Measles are making a comeback in the United States in communities where they were once eradicated.
- In a recent poll, 67% of Kansans reject the idea that we should add more wellness vaccine exemptions. Although 56% agree in principle that there should be a religious exemption, they believe the religious exemptions should be stricter in the following ways:
 - 61% want religious leader documentation
 - 65% want both parents to approve an exemption
 - 64% want there to be an annual exemption review
- **This bill takes away the freedom for private businesses to have vaccine requirements in the workplace and determine what is in the best interest of their employees and patrons.**
- **Meningococcal meningitis is very serious and can be deadly.** While the incidence is rare, infants, teens, and young adults have the highest rates of meningococcal disease in the U.S. In addition to the morbidity and mortality risks, the medical cost burden for patients with invasive meningococcal disease is significant. Vaccines are available that can help prevent meningococcal disease. Though there are many causes of meningitis beyond the ones covered in the vaccines, **the best prevention at this time is through vaccination.**

Please consider voting "NO" on SB 315. The process of the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) implementing the ACIP recommendations has historically been effective and efficient. The current process has proven to prevent outbreaks of childhood illnesses that could put a strain on childhood learning, as well as the economy from increased Kansas dollars spent on healthcare for both acute and chronic outcomes.

Sincerely,

Beth Schutte
1323 Hannah Lane
Haysville, Kansas

Testimony for SB 315

Opponent

Senate Public Health Committee,

I submit this testimony in opposition to SB 315. This bill has the potential to put our children, schools and communities in danger. Vaccines are safe and effective and have been one the most important public health advances as related to decreasing childhood mortality and chronic illness.

As a healthcare professional I have personally witnessed the power of vaccination in keeping my patients, who are your friends and community members, healthier and living longer lives. Lowering the requirement for vaccine exemption puts us all at risk and would represent a step backwards in public health protections for our state.

I urge you to vote not on SB 315 and not alter immunization requirements.

Jennifer Strickland
Family Nurse Practitioner

Testimony in Opposition of Senate Bill 315

March 17, 2023

Honorable Senator Beverly Gossage and members of the Public Health and Welfare Committee,

My name is Jeri Tegtmeier. I am an RN and APRN

I oppose SB 315 for the following reasons

- The National School Nurse Association has a position statement that supports elimination of all exemptions except those necessary for valid medical contraindications.
- Vaccine requirements are determined by state health officials **based on scientific recommendations for immunizations** by the Advisory Committee on Immunizations (ACIP). **These requirements keep students and school staff safe by ensuring they are protected when at schools, where potential exposure to life-altering diseases is high. The ACIP is comprised of a variety of specialists from across the United States.** ACIP Current Membership Roster | CDC
- **Expanding exemptions is the first step in unraveling the critical work that has nearly eradicated diseases like polio, hepatitis, measles, mumps, and rubella.** Expanding exemptions by going against the majority of Kansans' wishes discounts evidence and turns back the clock by several decades, failing to protect our children from preventable diseases. Vaccine preventable diseases like Measles are making a comeback in the United States in communities where they were once eradicated.
- In a recent poll, 67% of Kansans reject the idea that we should add more wellness vaccine exemptions. Although 56% agree in principle that there should be a religious exemption, they believe the religious exemptions should be stricter in the following ways:
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- **This bill takes away the freedom for private businesses to have vaccine requirements in the workplace** and determine what is in the best interest of their employees and patrons.
- **Meningococcal meningitis is very serious and can be deadly.** While the incidence is rare, infants, teens, and young adults have the highest rates of meningococcal disease in the U.S. In addition to the morbidity and mortality risks, the medical cost burden for patients with invasive

meningococcal disease is significant. Vaccines are available that can help prevent meningococcal disease. Though there are many causes of meningitis beyond the ones covered in the vaccines, **the best prevention at this time is through vaccination.**

Please consider voting "NO" on SB 315. The process of the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) implementing the ACIP recommendations has historically been effective and efficient. The current process has proven to prevent outbreaks of childhood illnesses that could put a strain on childhood learning, as well as the economy from increased Kansas dollars spent on healthcare for both acute and chronic outcomes.

Sincerely,

Jeri Tegtmeier, RN/APRN
2869 27th Road
Hanover, Kansas
66945

Testimony in Opposition of Senate Bill 315

March 19, 2023

Honorable Senator Beverly Gossage and members of the Public Health and Welfare Committee,

My name is Lisa Turner. I am a nurse, mom, and concerned citizen.

I oppose SB 315 for the following reasons

- The National School Nurse Association has a position statement that supports elimination of all exemptions except those necessary for valid medical contraindications.
- Vaccine requirements are determined by state health officials based on scientific recommendations for immunizations by the Advisory Committee on Immunizations (ACIP). These requirements keep students and school staff safe by ensuring they are protected when at schools, where potential exposure to life-altering diseases is high. The ACIP is comprised of a variety of specialists from across the United States. ACIP Current Membership Roster | CDC
- Expanding exemptions is the first step in unraveling the critical work that has nearly eradicated diseases like polio, hepatitis, measles, mumps, and rubella. Expanding exemptions by going against the majority of Kansans' wishes discounts evidence and turns back the clock by several decades, failing to protect our children from preventable diseases. Vaccine preventable diseases like Measles are making a comeback in the United States in communities where they were once eradicated.
- In a recent poll, 67% of Kansans reject the idea that we should add more wellness vaccine exemptions. Although 56% agree in principle that there should be a religious exemption, they believe the religious exemptions should be stricter in the following ways:
 - 61% want religious leader documentation
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 - 64% want there to be an annual exemption review
- This bill takes away the freedom for private businesses to have vaccine requirements in the workplace and determine what is in the best interest of their employees and patrons.
- Meningococcal meningitis is very serious and can be deadly. While the incidence is rare, infants, teens, and young adults have the highest rates of meningococcal disease in the U.S. In addition to the morbidity and mortality risks, the medical cost burden for patients with invasive meningococcal disease is significant. Vaccines are available that can help prevent meningococcal disease. Though there are many causes of meningitis beyond the ones covered in the vaccines, the best prevention at this time is through vaccination.

- As a school nurse and as a mom of children in elementary school, if this bill was passed and our vaccination requirements was weakened I would be extremely worried for the health of my students and my own children!

Please consider voting "NO" on SB 315. The process of the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) implementing the ACIP recommendations has historically been effective and efficient. The current process has proven to prevent outbreaks of childhood illnesses that could put a strain on childhood learning, as well as the economy from increased Kansas dollars spent on healthcare for both acute and chronic outcomes.

Sincerely,

Lisa Turner, RN, BSN
2476 N. Parkridge ct.
Wichita, KS. 67205

Written Testimony in Opposition of Senate Bill 315

March 21, 2023

Honorable Senator Beverly Gossage and members of the Public Health and Welfare Committee,

My name is Joann Wheeler. I am a mother as well as a public health nurse specializing in school nursing. In my 29 years of working in the educational system; I recognize how health issues have adversely impacted student education.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide information related to exemptions for required vaccinations for attendance at licensed child care facilities and school. School nursing is an extension of public health. School nurses audit student immunizations and exemptions. The school nurse is in a critical position to create awareness and influence action related to mandated and recommended immunizations in the school community. As such, I **oppose SB315**.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), vaccinations are one of the ten great public health achievements of the twentieth century. Vaccines have reduced or eliminated many diseases that once killed or seriously harmed infants, children, and adults. Vaccination requirements for school and day care attendance are seen as critical to ensuring high rates of vaccination in the U.S.

As a school nurse, I have seen the impact on students that were not immunized because parents claimed an exemption. One example of this impact: I had a teacher come down with chicken pox (varicella). The teacher taught physical education to sixth, seventh, and eighth graders as well as being a coach. The epidemiologist from the health department determined that any student in her class or athletic team with exposure of 45 minutes or longer were exposed to the virus. Parents were given 3 options. Students not immunized would need to get immunization within 24 hours, would need to be excluded for 21 days or have blood drawn for a titer that shows immunity. The result for some meant missing 21 days of school. This not only impacted their education but also impacted the parent's productivity at work. **Please vote "No" on SB 315**. The process of the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) implementing the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommendations has historically been effective and efficient. The current process has proven to prevent outbreaks of childhood illnesses that could put a strain on childhood learning, as well as the economy from increased Kansas dollars spent on healthcare for both acute and chronic outcomes.

Likewise, repealing the meningitis vaccine requirement to live in student housing would have a negative impact on students. Meningitis is an inflammation (swelling) of the protective membranes covering the brain and spinal cord. A bacterial or viral infection of the fluid surrounding the brain and spinal cord usually causes the swelling. Meningitis is serious and can cause death within days without prompt antibiotic treatment. Delayed treatment also increases the risk of permanent brain damage.

Working in the educational system, I have seen firsthand that healthy children learn better. I know children need to be in school to learn. I believe the current exemptions are sufficient. Changing the allowable exemptions would pose a significant risk to the health and well-being of Kansans students.

Furthermore, I firmly believe the Kansas Department of Health and Environment is the appropriate entity to set wellness vaccine policy for children in Kansas. These are the health professionals who look at the science and interpret data before making recommendations.

Thank you for providing the opportunity to address the committee. I urge you to **vote no on SB 315**.

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