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Healthy People Build Strong Communities

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**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 314 • March 22, 2023**

Chair Gossage and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 314 which prohibits the Secretary of the Kansas Department of Health and Environment from requiring COVID-19 vaccination for children attending a child care facility or school. KALHD is a nonprofit association dedicated to strengthening local health departments for the purpose of improving and protecting the health of all Kansans.

KALHD opposes efforts to shift immunization decision-making from public health professionals. This is the core reason we stand opposed to SB 314. To our knowledge, KDHE has no intention of mandating COVID-19 vaccination for children (at school or in child care). KALHD has no such position. However, we believe the Secretary of KDHE should retain the ability to issue this requirement if needed.

Let us consider a hypothetical. We have already seen a number of COVID-19 mutations, creating new variants and sub-variants (several of which have been far more contagious than the original strain). If COVID-19 were to mutate again, into a form that is far more dangerous to children, what would the impact of SB 314 be? Reading through the bill, we believe it would remove the best tool at preventing severe outcomes from COVID-19 infection (being vaccinated). We know a lot of Kansans do not like non-pharmaceutical mandates (e.g., requiring masks in a classroom) but under this hypothetical if the vaccine could not be required then other, less popular tactics would be considered to control disease spread.

KALHD does not foresee the COVID-19 vaccine becoming required for children, based off what we've seen out of the virus thus far. Nonetheless, that is a public health determination that should be left to public health experts. As such, we ask the committee to not recommend SB 314 favorably for passage.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Dennis Kriesel

Executive Director, Kansas Association of Local Health Departments