

**To: House Committee on Education
February 13, 2020**

From: Connie Satzler, M.S.

Chair Huebert, Vice Chair Dietrich, and Members of the Committee, this testimony **is submitted in opposition of House Bill 2601.**

As a mom and soon-to-be grandma, I oppose HB 2061. While some of the testimony you'll hear today lists technical reasons why the current process should remain in place and required vaccinations should not be moved to statute, my story as a parent helps illustrate the importance of child care and school immunization requirements. Furthermore, as a soon-to-be grandma, it is more important to me than ever that our children are protected to the fullest extent from vaccine-preventable diseases.

I'm an engineer by training, but I've worked in public health throughout my career. I have always been supportive of immunizations and a promoter of evidence-based, public health strategies. Yet, when my daughter was very young, the varicella (or chicken pox) vaccine had just come out. My doctor offered it at one of our office visits, but I wasn't mentally prepared for her to get a shot that day, and it was a brand-new vaccine. So, I hesitated. I declined the vaccine that day, thinking we would get it later.

Instead, later came, and my daughter got the chicken pox. In fact, all three of my kids had bad cases staggered over a 6-week period. It was a miserable time for our family, filled with sleepless nights, oatmeal baths, calamine lotion, and lots of tears – both theirs and mine. I felt like a terrible mother, knowing if they had been vaccinated, this could all have been avoided.

I felt even worse when not all of my daughter's chicken pox spots went away. Many of them stayed without really healing. Some new spots appeared, especially on her face and head. Weeks turned into months. There were periodic doctor and dermatologist visits during this time. Long story short, the chicken pox had triggered guttate psoriasis. And eventually her psoriasis spots evolved into the more traditional plaque psoriasis, which she's battled ever since. It's been a two-decade struggle and something she'll likely always deal with. Before she became pregnant, she was giving herself injections in her stomach every 8 weeks to help control her psoriasis.

A few years after my kids had the chicken pox, the varicella vaccine became required for child care and school entry. I was glad that other kids would be protected from the chicken pox and not experience what mine did. I wish the requirement had been in place when I was making the decision in my doctor's office. It would have provided that extra layer of credibility, and I would have gotten the vaccine without hesitation.

I learned my lesson the hard way. I am not qualified to make health decisions that go against evidence-based recommendations, much less decisions related to the best immunization schedule for my child. I need to trust my health care provider and the public health system. Any changes to the current process, like HB 2601, that move decision-making away from medical and public health experts and potentially politicize the immunization requirements process, are not in the best interests of Kansas children. I strongly urge you to oppose this bill and vote no on HB2601.

Respectfully submitted,

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