



TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION to HB 2498

February 21, 2022

Chairwoman Landwehr and Members of the House Health and Human Services Committee,

The Kansas Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics (KAAP) represents 450 pediatricians in the state. The KAAP has the fundamental goal that all children and adolescents in Kansas have the opportunity to grow safe and strong. It is with this goal in mind that we want to share our strong opposition to HB 2498 which prohibits the ability of public health officials to include a COVID-19 vaccine in the vaccine requirements for schools and childcare facilities. Kansas pediatricians oppose bills that intentionally or unintentionally have a negative impact on vaccination coverage in the state. This has the potential to be detrimental not only to public health in Kansas, but specifically child health and school safety. By interfering with benign sections of statute, we are unintentionally giving a platform to misinformation about vaccines. Vaccines are safe and effective.

Vaccination is the leading public health prevention strategy to end the COVID-19 pandemic. Keeping students safe while learning in-person, participating in extracurricular activities and sports, and optimizing their mental health and well-being is a priority. Promoting vaccination can help accomplish this.

The legislature serves a critical function in passing laws to protect the citizens of Kansas. Decisions to change any immunization law should be held to the highest standards of evidence-based scientific deliberations. HB 2498 introduces a concept that would remove the responsibility of determining health regulatory immunization policy from KDHE and opens the door for this responsibility in a more transient body subject to trends rather than science and data. This could delay the protection of Kansas' citizens from serious infectious diseases. Should vaccine recommendations change for COVID-19, it is essential to our state to be able to adapt and respond to these issues in a timely and effective manner. KDHE should maintain the ability to determine and address critical health related issues without political undermining. The Kansas Legislature should consider policies that build upon, rather than hinder immunization rates.

We must continue vaccinating to protect people by lessening and eliminating disease outbreaks. Vaccinations have led to steep decreases and eradication of many significant infectious diseases such as polio, measles, mumps, pertussis, and haemophilus influenza type B (Hib). Without immunizations, students, their families, and their communities are at risk for serious, potentially fatal diseases. Immunizations are our best protection against preventable disease and can help all Kansans live longer, healthier lives.



What might seem like simple adjustments to legislative and regulatory process could have real-life consequences for the health of children across the population of the state. Anything that hinders progress is a step in the wrong direction. KDHE should maintain the ability to determine and address critical health related issues without concern for politics. On behalf of Kansas Pediatricians, we would like to express our strong opposition to HB 2498 and respectfully request your NO VOTE on HB 2498.

Respectfully submitted,

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