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Healthy People Build Strong Communities

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

House Committee on Health and Human Services

Written-Only Opponent for HB 2498 • February 18, 2022

Madam Chair Landwehr and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to supply written testimony in opposition to House Bill 2498 regarding prohibiting the secretary of KDHE from requiring COVID-19 vaccination for children attending 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 HB 2498 because we believe public health is best protected when the childhood immunization schedule is left under the authority of the secretary of KDHE, and the rules and regulations process is employed to make vaccine determinations. KALHD does not advocate for requiring the COVID-19 vaccine for children and is not aware of KDHE planning for such a requirement. However, should the virus mutate in a substantial fashion that could greatly threaten the health of children we believe the current process gives our state the most flexibility to take action and minimize fatal outcomes.

KALHD believes immunization decision-making should be in the hands of public health professionals. Kansas should be focused on sustaining a public health system to ensure the health and safety of all Kansans. This means keeping items such as childhood vaccination mandates flexible should the need arise, including for COVID-19. As such, KALHD opposes HB 2498 and asks that the committee not recommend it for passage.

Sincerely,

Dennis Kriesel

Executive Director, Kansas Association of Local Health Departments