

Alan Gerling
Worship Director
Parent of a Medically Fragile Child

RE: Testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 213, February 22, 2021

Chairman Olson and members of the Senate Commerce Committee

I appreciate the opportunity to address you briefly regarding Senate Bill 213. I serve on staff at a church in Manhattan with congregants with a wide range of opinions about vaccinations. I appreciate the desire to guard the freedom of people working throughout Kansas to follow their consciences concerning vaccines.

However, as the parent of a medically fragile child, I am concerned that the bill as currently written is overly broad and fails to protect the vulnerable among us. Our daughter Chloe, who will turn seven this April, has a rare genetic condition called Mosaic Trisomy 22. Because of this genetic condition, she has several physical differences, including a three-chamber heart and only one kidney. We have spent over a year total admitted to Children's Mercy in Kansas City. Five months were spent in the NICU, and we had several stints in the PICU for surgeries or times when she was sick (several of those being for a cold).

Early on in her life, she had an emergency that eventually resulted in her needing a tracheostomy. Currently, she is on a ventilator at night. Because of her fragility, we have had to be very careful to protect her from respiratory diseases like colds, influenza, and now COVID. This protection has taken the form of homeschooling two other children, staying isolated during cold/flu season (we have been getting groceries delivered for years before COVID), and quarantining family members who are sick in another part of the house.

One more protection has been our requirement that anyone who comes into our house is up to date on their vaccines, including having had the yearly flu vaccine. This includes any teachers who come into our home (Chloe is considered homebound due to her fragile state, so the district sends teachers and therapists to the home), and any home-health nurses (Chloe currently has a nurse three days a week) from the nursing company Medicaid contracts with.

I am concerned that given the language Bill 213, the nursing company would not be allowed to require nurses they send our way to be vaccinated (particularly against influenza and COVID). The school district would not be able to require any teachers to come into our home to be vaccinated (if a teacher has an objection, they find a different teacher to work with Chloe).

Beyond that, nursing homes, hospitals, and other facilities that care for the vulnerable among us would not be able to require vaccinations to protect those under their care. I urge you against adopting Bill 213.

Alan Gerling

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alan Gerling', with a stylized flourish at the end.