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Kansas Action for Children
Written testimony in opposition to SB 213
Senate Committee on Commerce

Chairperson Olson and Members of the Committee:

Kansas Action for Children (KAC) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization. Our vision is to make Kansas the best state to raise -- and be -- a child, and our organization shapes health, education, and economic policies that improve the lives of Kansas children and families.

Today, we strongly oppose SB 213.

First, this bill is not focused on the COVID-19 vaccine. As SB 213 is written, it could apply to any vaccine that an employer might require for staff. That includes health care organizations whose staff directly work with patients who may not be able to be vaccinated due to medical conditions, or who may be otherwise immunocompromised.

That includes hospitals where staff work with numerous patients, including those in pediatric oncology wards, neonatal intensive care units, or pediatric intensive care units; these patients are at particularly high risk for severe complications from vaccine-preventable diseases.

That also includes agencies that provide home caregivers for children with special needs who are at high risk for illness. These children can't be vaccinated due to their medical conditions and must rely on those around them to be vaccinated. Without a vaccine requirement of these employees, these children would be put at high risk of severe complications from vaccine-preventable diseases.

Furthermore, by prohibiting employers from taking any adverse employment actions against an employee because of the employee's vaccination status, **SB 213 takes away the freedom** for private businesses to decide what is in the best interest of their customers and employees. Employers have the right to protect their employees and

customers and establish employee qualifications, which can include health and safety standards. In fact, employers in our state have an obligation to provide a safe workplace for their employees, and the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission allows companies to require vaccines for influenza and other illnesses.

Vaccinations are among the greatest achievements of public health. Vaccinations have all but eradicated once-prevalent diseases such as measles and polio, protecting the lives and health of Kansans. Vaccines offer the United States a promising path back from the COVID-19 pandemic, too. Vaccines are safe and effective. The United States vaccine safety program closely and constantly monitors the safety of all vaccines.

Thank you for the opportunity to **voice our strong opposition to SB 213**, and please do not hesitate to contact me at heather@kac.org if you have any questions.