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Testimony: SB 213 – Employees' vaccination status (Opponent)
Senate Commerce Committee
February 25, 2021

By: Chad Johanning, MD, FAAFP (written only)

Chairman Olson and members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Kansas Academy of Family Physicians (KAFP) this written testimony is **submitted in opposition of Senate Bill 213.**

Vaccinations are among the greatest achievements of public health. Vaccinations have significantly decreased rates of vaccine-preventable diseases, protecting the lives and health of Kansans from serious diseases. Vaccines are safe and effective. The United States vaccine safety program closely and constantly monitors the safety of all vaccines.

By prohibiting employers from taking any adverse employment actions against 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 patrons 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 influenza and other vaccines.

Of particular concern is that this bill would infringe on the rights of healthcare and long-term care facilities to implement employee vaccination requirements, as they see necessary, to protect their employees, patients and residents from vaccine-preventable disease. Without the freedom for employers to set requirements, many Kansans at high-risk for severe complications from vaccine-preventable disease, including infants, elderly and immunocompromised individuals, would not be able to safely receive essential health services.

As family physicians, we work to ensure our patients and the communities we serve are safe. Vaccinating for preventable diseases contributes significantly to lowering healthcare costs, decreased time off work for employees and increased herd immunity for our most vulnerable populations. Particularly in a healthcare setting, vaccinating workers so they can best serve our patients is vital.

Thank you for the opportunity to present our concern. In summary, **we oppose SB 213** and are in favor of employers retaining the freedom to protect their employees, patients, and customers with vaccination requirements as they deem necessary.

Chad Johanning, MD, FAAFP
Lawrence
KAFP President

About Kansas Academy of Family Physicians:

KAFP represents nearly 2,000 active, resident, student and life members across the state. *The mission of KAFP is to support and serve family physicians of Kansas as they advance the health of Kansans.* Quality health care and health outcomes for our patients guide our public policy work. As family physicians, we see people of all ages, both men and women, and we work with almost every type of ailment and illness that afflict our patients.