

**SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE
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Senate Judiciary Committee

Attn: Iris Evans, Committee Assistant

Kansas State Capital

300 SW 10th Avenue, Rm 441-E

Topeka, KS 66612-1586

Contact Iris by phone at: **785-296-6817**

Date of Meeting 3/26/2021

Bill #:SB 304	OR	Presentation on:
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Print Name and phone number of person who will be testifying:

Dennis Kriesel	785-271-8391
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Print Name and phone number of contact person if different:

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Agency Represented:

Kansas Association of Local Health Departments (KALHD)
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Check all that apply:

Proponent	Opponent X	Neutral
Oral Testimony (Speaking)	Written Only (Not Speaking) X	
In Person	Webex	

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Healthy People Build Strong Communities

Testimony of the Kansas Association of Local Health Departments (KALHD) to the

Senate Committee on Judiciary

Opponent for SB 304 • March 26, 2021

Chairwoman Warren and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to supply written testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 304 regarding removing the sunset provision in the COVID-19 contact tracing privacy act. KALHD is a nonprofit association dedicated to strengthening local health departments for the purpose of improving and protecting the health of all Kansans.

We oppose this legislation because we believe there are existing privacy safeguards related to contact tracing that already exist and continuing to operate one set of rules for COVID-19 contact tracing versus every other reportable disease creates added bureaucracy and confusion for public health. For example, health information is already considered private under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).

We understand that, when the pandemic was starting, the Kansas Legislature was in a hurry to take steps to ensure privacy issues remained important when it came to disease response. However, we are not aware of any major issues with the prior approach, and a bifurcated contact tracing system makes little sense, particularly now that the COVID-19 pandemic is winding down and we hope to see it being managed like many other vaccine-preventable (yet reportable) diseases as we move forward. Naturally, we are open to the legislature exploring universal rules for all contact tracing (and we would welcome participating in the process), but KALHD feels those should apply in all instances, not one set of rules for COVID-19 and another set for every other disease local health is obligated to investigate. And SB 304 seems rushed and skipped any actual effort for review and development of a new, universal system.

Local health departments feel the COVID-19 contact tracing privacy act no longer provides any real added benefit and can be safely allowed to sunset. Other standing laws, rules, and regulations will adequately safeguard privacy on COVID-19 contact tracing work (as they do for all other diseases). In a future session, if there is desire for universal contact tracing standards, we welcome participating in their development. As such, we ask that this committee not report SB 304 favorably and allow this act to sunset as originally intended.

Sincerely,

Dennis Kriesel

Executive Director, Kansas Association of Local Health Departments