



March 22, 2021

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Kansas Action for Children
Written testimony in opposition to SB 212
Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee

Chairperson Hilderbrand and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition to SB 212.

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.

We oppose specifying the required childhood immunizations for child care facility and school attendance in statute.

Why? We believe a critical tool for the health and well-being of Kansas children should not be subject to periodic votes in the legislature. The current process, in which trained medical professionals collaborate to update the lists of required vaccines, is appropriate and necessary.

Vaccines keep children healthy and ready for school. Vaccines keep working adults healthy and businesses in operation. Vaccines protect those who are unable to be vaccinated for medical reasons from getting life-threatening illnesses.

According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, “when immunization rates are high, herd immunity develops and limits the spread of the disease, which helps protect those who cannot be vaccinated.”¹ Limiting disease is good for children, families, businesses, and the entire state.

Over these past few months, we have seen how vital vaccines are to public health. They

¹ National Conference of State Legislatures, <https://www.ncsl.org/research/health/state-vaccination-policies-requirements-and-exemptions-for-entering-school.aspx>

are the way out of the COVID-19 pandemic and our best hope for restoring normalcy for Kansans. Vaccines are a cornerstone of our health system, and they **should not be made part of a partisan political process, even one with the best of intentions.**

SB 212 presents practical problems. Shifting required vaccines from the current regulatory process to being listed in statutes will make it more difficult to quickly respond to changes made by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP). Given the legislative schedule, it would be difficult to ensure the list of vaccines required for school, which typically comes out in February, would be updated in a timely manner. It seems unlikely legislators would consistently be able to stay aware of any needed changes, introduce legislation, have a hearing, and pass a bill in time for the February notification.

Kansas should make it easier for families to receive vaccinations on schedule, but this bill would complicate the process. It would put public health up to a yearly debate. As we have seen throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, situations can change within months or mere weeks. Public health officials need effective tools to stop the spread of disease.

For these reasons, Kansas Action for Children opposes SB 212, which would change the current regulatory process and instead specify the required childhood immunizations for child care facility and school attendance. **The current regulatory process through the Kansas Department of Health and Environment should remain.** We respectfully request the Committee oppose this bill and work to maintain the health and safety of our state's children.

Thank you again for the opportunity to offer testimony in opposition to SB 212; please do not hesitate to contact me at heather@kac.org if you have any questions.