

Testimony concerning SB 391, respectfully submitted by Brian Thomas of Topeka.

Senators:

Senate Bill 391 presents a real danger to the health and safety of Kansans, especially the most vulnerable among us.

This bill would cripple public health officials in their efforts to keep us all safe from preventable diseases. I wish to believe that everyone in our society strives to behave responsibly and protect themselves and those around them by taking common sense precautions when dangerous health threats arise. Unfortunately, through lack of knowledge or outright disregard for others, this is not always the case.

Public health systems exist for a reason – they protect all of us, and especially the most vulnerable, from the spread of disease. The values of individual liberty and freedom are essential to us as Kansans, but individual freedom should not come at the cost of severe harm to the majority through misunderstanding or deliberate misinformation. Individuals who are vulnerable, due to pre-existing conditions or being elderly or young, are directly protected by our public health systems. Weakening such systems will curtail their freedom.

We do not always appreciate the effectiveness of public health measures in keeping us safe because an averted crisis is an invisible one. Let's not go back to a time when preventable diseases ran rampant, killing or permanently debilitating so many.

The safety of all of us, and especially the young, old, and others who are especially vulnerable to disease, rely on a functioning public health system.

Respectfully,

Brian Thomas