

**Date: February 13, 2024**

**To: Honorable Senator Beverly Gossage and members of the Public Health and Welfare Committee**

My name is Cynthia Galemore, and I am writing in opposition to SB 390 and SB 391. I am a registered nurse, mother, and grandmother, and I am passionate about this topic. I practiced for over 27 years working at Olathe Public Schools, the majority of the time as Director of Health Services. In retirement I continue working part time as an editor of a nursing journal and volunteer in our local schools.

During my time with Olathe Public Schools, I noticed that the percentage of parents claiming religious exemption to vaccines grew dramatically (from 0.37% of our population claiming exemptions in 1998 to almost 2% in 2013 - in 15 years). This information is public as I presented a written annual report to our Board of Education annually. My report in 2013 went on to explain that according to experts in immunology, easy exemption processes are associated with high exemption rates and once a population has 1% or higher unvaccinated no matter the reason, the population is at increased risk for disease outbreak.

Fortunately, but also unfortunately, our current younger generations have very little knowledge of vaccine preventable illnesses, as vaccines have been successful in reducing the incidences of these serious diseases. I, on the other hand, can remember having teachers with musculoskeletal disabilities due to having polio, a neighbor unable to have children after contracting mumps in his adolescence, and great aunts and uncles dying in infancy and toddlerhood from influenza. Those contracting vaccine-preventable diseases are able to spread the disease to others often before even knowing they are infected, which includes children with multiple, severe disabilities and those unable to be vaccinated due to medical conditions who we service in our schools.

**I oppose SB 390 and SB 391 for the following reasons:**

1. The National School Nurse Association has a [position statement](#) that supports elimination of all exemptions except those necessary for valid medical contraindications.
2. Vaccine requirements are determined by state health officials **based on scientific recommendations for immunizations** by the Advisory Committee on Immunizations (ACIP). **These requirements keep students and school staff safe by ensuring they are protected when at schools, where potential exposure to life-altering diseases is high. The ACIP is comprised of a variety of specialists from across the United States.** [ACIP Current Membership Roster | CDC](#)
3. **Expanding exemptions by allowing conscientious exemption is the first step in unraveling the critical work that has nearly eradicated diseases like polio, hepatitis, measles, mumps, and rubella.** Expanding exemptions and removing regulations to monitor and control disease outbreak goes against the majority of Kansans' wishes, discounts evidence, and turns back the clock by several decades, failing to protect our children from preventable diseases. Vaccine preventable diseases like Measles are making a comeback in the United States in communities where they were once eradicated. See KAKE.COM for report of measles exposure in North Kansas City this past month

<https://www.kake.com/story/50327071/measles-exposure-confirmed-at-kci-north-kansas-city-hospital>.

4. **In a recent poll, 67% of Kansans reject the idea that we should add more vaccine exemptions.** Although **56% agree in principle that there should be a religious exemption, they believe the religious exemptions should be stricter** in the following ways:
  - o 61% want religious leader documentation
  - o 65% want both parents to approve an exemption
  - o 64% want there to be an annual exemption review
5. **SB 390 bill takes away the freedom for private businesses to have vaccine requirements in the workplace** and determine what is in the best interest of their employees and patrons, especially in healthcare facilities.

**Please consider voting “NO” on both of these bills.** The process of the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) implementing the ACIP recommendations and managing outbreaks based on the science specific to each infectious agent has historically been effective and efficient. The current process has proven to prevent outbreaks of childhood illnesses that could put a strain on childhood learning, lead to increased morbidity and mortality of both our pediatric population as well as the adults working in Kansas Schools, not to mention the impact on the economy from increased Kansas dollars spent on healthcare for both acute and chronic outcomes.

Sincerely,

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