

Senate Committee on Public Health and Welfare
February 15, 2024
Senate Bill 391

Dear Chairwoman Gossage and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to present this written testimony against SB 391, which would remove the ability of local health officers to require quarantines for individuals who present with infectious diseases.

Identifying people with infectious diseases is critical to disease prevention and public health. The practice of isolation and quarantine, while not fully understood then, dates back to ancient and Biblical societies.¹ Up to the present day, these practices are the most appropriate way to prevent the spread of disease. I acknowledge concerns about government overreach and contend that the fundamental role of government is protecting the health and safety of families in Kansas.

A year ago, this committee attempted to enact SB 6, among others, into law. Had that succeeded, the recent Tuberculosis (TB) outbreak in my community (Olathe, KS) would likely still be ongoing - but the local health department's contact tracing, testing, quarantine, and isolation efforts were unimpeded.² Now, SB 391 would allow for this to occur. This is not fear-mongering or playing the "what-if" game - this is what would happen.

In recent years, Kansas has experienced several unintended disease outbreaks ranging from measles and rubella to the obvious SARS-CoV-2 pandemic. These have caused devastating losses of life and caused significant financial burdens.

In addition, SB 391 is not just a concern about diseases affecting humans. The current global pandemic of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) and the increasing concern about the fungus *Candida auris* have hit Kansas's doorstep.^{3,4} These disease-causing pathogens, unstoppable, will cause havoc across the state. *Candida auris* already causes significant diseases in humans.⁵ This does not even touch on the impact of food-based outbreaks, and beyond.

The government's responsibility is to facilitate the infrastructure and environment so that the People can live healthy lives. The purpose of required quarantine and isolation is for experts in the field to do their job to track and treat those who may not know they are spreading the disease. SB 391 sends the message that, when outbreaks hit, Kansans are on their own.

SB 391 would increase the burden on Kansas families for generations to come through disease leading to disability and death, raise the already crippling healthcare costs in the state, and disregard the well-being of both persons and livestock. I implore you to consider the weight of this decision, the lessons from past outbreaks, and the well-being of our families.

A vote against SB 391 is a vote in favor of a healthier tomorrow, and I sincerely ask for your support in protecting our community. Thank you for your time and consideration, I ask you to vote NO on SB 391!

Sincerely,

Devin Quinn | Lifelong Kansan | Student | Healthcare worker | quinnd1227@gmail.com

1. Tognotti E. (2013). Lessons from the history of quarantine, from plague to influenza A. *Emerging infectious diseases*, 19(2), 254–259. <https://doi.org/10.3201/eid1902.120312>
2. <https://www.iocogov.ore/department/health-and-environment/olathe-northwest-high-school-tuberculosis-information>
3. <https://kansasreflector.com/2024/01/22/kansas-agriculture-secretary-confirms-states-15th-case-of-deadly-avian-influenza-since-dec->
4. White, T. C., Esquivel, B. D., Rouse Salcido, E. M., Schweiker, A. M., Dos Santos, A. R., Gade, L., Petro, E., KuKanich, B., & KuKanich, K. S. (2024). *Candida auris* detected in the oral cavity of a dog in Kansas. *mBio*, e0308023. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1128/mbio.03080-23>
5. <https://www.medpagetoday.com/special-reports/features/108600>