

To: House Education Committee
From: Susan Wood R.N., BSN, Chair of Immunize Kansas Coalition
RE: Testimony in opposition of HB 2601
February 13, 2020

Good Afternoon Chairman Huebert, Vice-Chair Dietrich and Committee members. I am here today as a lifelong Kansan and as the chairperson of the Immunize Kansas Coalition. I serve on the coalition as an individual member, which means that I do not represent any other business or entity.

The coalition was founded in 2005 with a focus on children as "Immunize Kansas Kids". While we continue to focus our efforts toward children for improvement, we advocate and share information applicable to the full spectrum of life, to improve and protect the public health. The coalition is composed of members who share the mission to protect Kansans from vaccine preventable disease. The voting membership includes health providers, educators, nurses, hospitals, health departments, pharmacies and researchers.

The KDHE immunization program is more to me than simply a program. It represents my confidence that Kansas has a group of health experts in place to ensure Kansans are protected regardless of politics, and decisions are made based on solid scientific practices.

HB 2601 would require that vaccines to be included on the vaccine schedule be listed in statute and any additions would require action through legislation or for enough illness to be experienced to activate the "imminent hazard" clause, which expires the following year. By removing the regulatory authority of public health experts at KDHE to determine vaccination requirements, HB 2601 risks Kansas' ability to respond timely to the best scientific recommendations for immunizations as set forth by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP).

This concerns me as an individual and as a member of IKC. I grew up in a wonderful family. We were a family of 7 children and 2 adults. We lived in close quarters in a 3-bedroom trailer home. We were the kids on reduced lunches, we wore handed down clothing, our home was heated with a wood stove, and we did not have television for most of the time I lived at home. We worked hard, we stood in line at the health department to receive our vaccines and walked out with our pink card updated.

I recently spoke with my mother to understand why they chose to go to the effort of getting to town, waiting in line, and finding the money to pay for vaccines and her answer was simple. She had seen the impact of disease; the illness and the life changing side effects suffered by many; she herself had Mumps and Measles as a child. She wanted to prevent not only her children, but all children from having to go through these experiences and have healthier lives.

We attended a rural school, went to town for groceries monthly, and eating out was a rare event. But somewhere along the way, one of my younger brothers as a young teenager contracted Mumps. Fortunately, he recovered fully and I am confident that the immunity within his system

helped him to avoid long term effects. Equally important, none of the rest of the family became ill. This is the protection provided through population immunity. New diseases are on the horizon, as are the tireless efforts to develop vaccines to maintain our protections. Our health experts must be allowed to respond to changes as they occur.

KDHE administers and maintains the vaccine program, staffed by a team who are immersed in the evidence, science and tracking of the status of public health in our communities, in our state, and as a nation. They are led by the Secretary, who is accountable to the administrative government in place and ensures that the People's work is done, regardless of current politics.

The team at KDHE and ultimately the Secretary are our experts for Kansas. They are the appropriate option to vet the science and recommendations and to adjust the vaccine schedule to protect our children and families.

HB 2601 represents a barrier to advancing public health and is unnecessary. The vaccination program and its oversight as it exists is clear, and the opportunity for public response is available when changes are proposed.

On behalf of IKC, we oppose HB 2601 because the changes proposed are unnecessary and place public health at risk by inserting administrative barriers into a system which serves effectively in its current form. We are in favor of the KDHE Secretary retaining the flexibility and authority to respond to the recommendation for new vaccines by ACIP as part of the routine child and adolescent vaccination schedule maintenance.

Thank you.