



**Kansas Hospital
ASSOCIATION**

To: House Committee on Education

From: Audrey Dunkel
Vice President, Financial Advocacy

Date: February 13, 2020

Re: House Bill 2601

I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition of House Bill 2601, regarding childhood immunizations.

Vaccinations are crucial in preventing and in some cases eliminating disease. Diseases that once injured or killed thousands of children, have been eliminated completely and others are close to extinction primarily due to safe and effective vaccines. For example, polio was once America's most feared disease, causing death and paralysis. Due to vaccinations, polio has been eliminated in the United States. Smallpox vaccination eradicated that disease worldwide. Our children do not have to get smallpox shots anymore because the disease no longer exists in our country.

Vaccinating children protects those around us and saves lives. Unfortunately, children in our country still contract vaccine-preventable diseases. In fact, Kansas has seen resurgence of measles and whooping cough (pertussis) over the past few years due to a decrease in vaccinations. In 2010 the U.S. had over 15,000 cases of whooping cough reported and 5 deaths -- most in children younger than 6 months. Some babies are too young to be completely vaccinated and some may not be able to receive certain vaccinations due to severe allergies, weakened immune systems from conditions like leukemia or chemotherapy treatments. To help keep them safe, it is important that children who can be vaccinated are fully immunized. This not only protects our families, but also helps prevent the spread of these diseases to friends and loved ones.

The Kansas Hospital Association (KHA) supports the authority of the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE), an agency charged to establish policies that protect and improve the lives of Kansans, to determine which vaccinations are required for school entry.

We oppose this bill because it limits the ability of the agency to respond quickly to emerging threats to the health of Kansans due to the constraints of the legislative process and schedule.

We respectfully ask that you vote no on HB 2601.