

Dawn Olney

Opposition Testimony for SB 489 - Removing certain regulatory authority concerning infectious or contagious diseases from the secretary of health and environment.

Written Testimony

March 4, 2022

My name is Dawn Olney, and I am a concerned Kansas citizen. I am testifying today to ask you to vote NO on SB 489.

Thanks to medical science, we are enjoying longer, healthier lives than we did 50 years ago. Many cancers can be cured or managed; heart disease, diabetes, neurological disease, and many other diseases have much improved treatments to prolong life and alleviate discomfort and outright suffering.

We have also made strides in infectious disease. **I think too many people don't even realize the effect infectious diseases can have on people, because public health has been so successful.** Death and long-term consequences of infectious disease are not unique to COVID. Everyone knows **polio** kills people and can lead to life-long disability in many cases. At the end of this testimony is the description of diphtheria, an infectious disease that hasn't been prevalent in the US for almost 100 years, thanks to public health efforts to vaccinate. Most people don't even know what diphtheria is, only that we vaccinate babies against it.

Vaccines played a big part in eradicating these illnesses, along with public health protocols. Public health agents used to post quarantine signs on houses with various infections. There have been public health drives to vaccinate against **polio, diphtheria, whooping cough** and all the other childhood vaccinations. I used to line up as a child every year in school to get a **TB** test.

Public health is behind sanitation – sewage and clean water in our pipes. Those improvements eliminated **infectious cholera, diarrhea, dysentery, hepatitis A, typhoid and polio** to a large extent in the US.

The US has benefitted tremendously from Public Health policy. Public health officers spend their lives studying disease and policies. I suspect you trust your physician when it comes to your heart, cancer diagnosis, and diabetes. It is time to trust physicians and public health officials to mitigate viral and bacterial diseases also.

We must keep infectious and contagious diseases under the auspices of Public Health to keep us safe from those diseases. We do not need a recurrence of near-eradicated illnesses or a failure to contain new virus outbreaks.

**Please vote no on SB 489.**

Thank you for reading my testimony.

Dawn Olney

Prairie Village, KS

### **Transmission and Symptoms**

Diphtheria is transmitted from person to person, usually via respiratory droplets. The infection is caused by bacteria called *Corynebacterium diphtheriae*. An infected person, unless treated with antibiotics, is infectious for two to three weeks. Symptoms include sore throat, loss of appetite, and fever. The most notable feature of diphtheria infection, however, is the formation of a thick gray substance called a pseudomembrane over the nasal tissues, tonsils, larynx, and/or pharynx.

The pseudomembrane is formed from waste products and proteins caused by the toxin secreted by the bacteria. The pseudomembrane sticks to tissues and may obstruct breathing. The toxin itself may travel to the heart, muscle, kidneys, and liver, where it may temporarily or permanently damage these organs.

### **Complications**

Complications from diphtheria may include myocarditis (damage to the heart muscle), neuritis (inflammation of nerves, which may contribute to nerve damage, paralysis, respiratory failure, and pneumonia), airway obstruction, and ear infection.