

SESSION OF 2008

SUPPLEMENTAL NOTE ON SENATE BILL NO. 548

As Recommended by Senate Committee on
Public Health and Welfare

Brief*

SB 548 would require the Kansas Department of Health and Environment to increase influenza immunization awareness and participation among parents of children age six months to five years who are enrolled in child care facilities. The Department of Health and Environment would be required to have information on the benefits of annual immunization against influenza for children on its official website and to cooperate with the Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services in distributing information to parents and child care facilities in August and September every year.

The Department of Health and Environment also would be required to conduct a study of the feasibility of establishing a school-based influenza vaccination pilot program including the costs and benefits of a pilot program; barriers to implementation and strategies for removing the program barriers; the fiscal impact of a pilot program; and the use of vaccines that speed administration by health officials with the least potential adverse events. The Department would be required to submit a report on its findings to the Joint Committee on Health Policy Oversight prior to the 2009 Legislative Session and the Joint Committee could introduce bills or request funding for the pilot program. Also, the Department would be authorized to seek funding for implementation of the pilot study from any public or private source.

*Supplemental notes are prepared by the Legislative Research Department and do not express legislative intent. The supplemental note and fiscal note for this bill may be accessed on the Internet at <http://www.kslegislature.org>

Background

The bill was introduced by the Committee at the request of Senator Vicki Schmidt. Proponents of the bill included a representative of MedImmune, Inc. who stated that vaccination of school-aged children against influenza is gaining support in the medical community because of the need to help protect this age group, which has the highest influenza attack rate. Also, school-based vaccination could provide an efficient mechanism for access to vaccination. A physician testified that influenza is an aggressive virus that mutates rapidly and, thus, must be accounted for every year. The Director of the Bureau of Disease Control and Prevention, Kansas Department of Health and Environment, stated that childhood and adolescent immunization may represent an important step in protecting the rest of the population from illness, hospitalization and death. The Director also stated that a recent study demonstrated that, if an 80 percent influenza immunization rate is achieved for children under the age of 19 in the United States, over 32,000 deaths and 100,000 hospitalizations could be prevented in the elderly population.

Written testimony was provided by a representative of the Kansas Medical Society who stated that influenza vaccination is the most effective method for preventing influenza virus infection and its potentially severe complications. Written testimony was provided by the Director of Student Services, Auburn-Washburn Unified School District 437, who stated that the school district had conducted a flu clinic for the past two years in which most students received the nasal inhalant form of vaccination. Although the school district felt the clinic was beneficial to the students, the district does not plan to hold the clinic again because of the obstacles of acquiring the vaccine at the right time and in the right quantities, coordinating nursing services, and coordinating payment options through insurance and Medicaid. Written testimony also was provided by a rural Kansas pediatrician who stated that school vaccine programs are effective and an excellent opportunity to vaccinate otherwise healthy children who may not have an opportunity to visit with a doctor or clinic.

There were no opponents to the bill. The Associate Director of Public Health Systems, Kansas Health Institute, appeared as a neutral conferee and stated that effectively vaccinating children against influenza is an important public health issue. He further stated that children who contract influenza can develop complications that can be fatal and there is a growing body of evidence that children represent a reservoir for community-wide outbreaks of influenza.

The fiscal note prepared by the Division of the Budget states that passage of the bill would increase expenditures for the Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services by \$17,427, including \$6,696 from the State General Fund and \$10,731 from federal funds, to mail 52,178 notices to parents and child care facilities. The Division of the Budget did not receive fiscal information from the Department of Health and Environment concerning the Department's costs to implement the bill. Any fiscal effects resulting from the bill would be in addition to amounts recommended in *The FY 2009 Governor's Budget Report*.