



KANSAS ACADEMY OF
FAMILY PHYSICIANS

CARING FOR KANSANS

Testimony: SB 6
Senate Committee on Public Health and Welfare
February 13, 2023
Written Only

Chair Gossage and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony opposing SB 6, on behalf of the Kansas Academy of Family Physicians (KAFP). The KAFP represents nearly 2,000 family physicians, resident physicians and medical students across our state. Providing quality health care and resulting in good health outcomes for our patients guide our public policy work.

The Academy believes the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) and our local health departments are the most qualified state entities to make determinations about public health safety concerns. Unintentionally, this bill undermines KDHE's mission, which is *to protect and improve the health and environment of all Kansans*.

Public health officers are not political, elected officials; they are professionals, physicians and nurses with the education and experience to make decision based on science and not public opinion. KAFP believes SB 6 presents potential public health implications if adopted into law. Prohibiting the Secretary of Health and Environment and local public health experts from issuing scientifically-supported orders to safely managing physical contact removes a critical intervention during outbreaks.

Restricting our public health officers abilities to protect our communities during a time of public health crisis places the health, wellness and livelihood of our patients and their families at risk.

The passage of this bill would not only apply to a similar pandemic to COVID-19, but also infectious diseases like measles and ebola. These diseases are highly communicable and require preventative action within hours, not days or weeks to prevent the spread.

The work of our community health departments during the COVID-19 pandemic kept our towns and cities safe. Our members partnered with their health departments to triage citizens that had fallen ill to the disease and to screen other Kansans for potential infection. They also provided testing, contact tracing and vaccinations. Their contributions are invaluable to the health of our communities.

The KAFP opposes this bill because it would restrict the authority of the secretary of health and environment and local health officers to prevent the introduction and spread of infectious or contagious diseases and repeals the authority of the secretary to quarantine individuals.

Thank you again for this opportunity to submit comments on behalf of the KAFP. We appreciate your thoughtful examination of all matters regarding the health and safety of Kansans.

About Kansas Academy of Family Physicians:

KAFP represents nearly 2,000 active, resident, student and life members across the state. Our member physicians are vibrant and trusted members of their communities and are dedicated to creating a healthier Kansas. Quality health care and health outcomes for our patients guide our public policy work. As family physicians, we see people of all ages, both men and women, and we work with almost every type of ailment and illness that afflict our patients.