

TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION OF SB 390

February 14, 2024

Chair Gossage, Vice Chair Erickson, Ranking Member Pettey and members of the committee:

I am Dr. Dena Hubbard, the Public Policy Chair for the Kansas Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics (KAAP) and a board-certified neonatologist. Thank you for the opportunity to express KAAP's strong opposition to SB 390. The KAAP and the 400 pediatricians it represents share a fundamental goal that all infants, children, and adolescents in Kansas can grow safe and strong. This bill threatens the health and well-being of children in our state by enacting the conscientious right to refuse act. SB 390 fails to protect Kansas children and families from preventable diseases.

Vaccines safeguard individuals from disease by preparing their immune systems to recognize and resist preventable diseases. A strong immune system for children helps to keep them healthy so they can keep growing, learning, and thriving. This not only helps the child, but it also helps the broader community. When immune systems are strong, it is harder for illness to spread.

This year marks the 30th anniversary of the Vaccines for Children (VFC) Program. Through the VFC program alone, routine childhood immunizations have:

- prevented 472 million illnesses.
- helped avoid over a million deaths.
- saved nearly \$2.2 trillion in total societal costs, including \$479 billion in direct costs.

Childhood immunizations is one of our strongest public health investments, using scarce public resources to yield the highest returns on investment.

SB 390 would have untold consequences for our ability to prevent disease. It directly contradicts established effective measures and the expressed will of the people in our state. Additionally, this bill does not currently have a fiscal note. The public cost of any increases in preventable diseases borne by our state because of this legislation must be considered.

Kansas voters overwhelmingly place their trust in the safety and efficacy of wellness vaccines. A 2022 statewide survey of Kansas voters reveals that over 95% consider vaccines for diseases such as measles, mumps, and polio to be extremely or very important for maintaining good health. This strong trust in vaccines is consistent across political ideology, as shown in Table 1. SB 390 diverges from the beliefs of most Kansans.

Table 1

More than 9-in-10 Kansas voters believes wellness vaccines are completely/mostly safe:

- Republicans, 96%
- Independents, 95%
- Democrats, 98%

More than 9-in-10 Kansas voters believes wellness vaccines are completely/mostly effective:

- Republicans, 97%
- Independents, 95%
- Democrats, 100%

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# KANSAS

In Kansas, we have a proud tradition of looking out for each other. We take seriously our responsibility to the common good. In fact, more than 90% of Kansas voters across the ideological spectrum support the implementation of vaccine requirements for children attending school or child care facilities. We must allow hospitals, pediatric clinics, child care facilities, and schools to have the autonomy to establish safety protocols based on public health and clinical guidelines rather than legislative mandates.

Kansans are hardworking and caring neighbors and friends. It takes all of us to help Kansas communities to stay healthy and thrive. Children depend on us, and now is the time to be sure we are using trusted information to make good decisions about our future. Immunizations prevent tens of thousands of deaths, millions of cases of disease, and save billions of dollars per decade.

For these reasons, we urge a no vote on SB 390.

I stand for questions at the appropriate time.

Dena K. Hubbard, MD, FAAP  
Public Committee Chair  
Kansas Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics