

February 14, 2024

Opponent Testimony SB 390- Written Only

As an elementary school nurse in Johnson County, **I oppose SB 390**- Enacting the conscientious right to refuse act to prohibit discrimination against individuals to refuse medical care and creating a civil cause of action based on such discrimination; repealing the authority of the secretary of health and environment to quarantine individuals and impose associated penalties. Kansas already recognizes two exemptions from vaccination, medical and religious. These two exemptions work well while still ensuring we have high rates of vaccination. If we weaken the law by allowing vaccines to become just voluntary, we will lose the herd immunity levels needed to prevent outbreaks of illnesses like measles, chickenpox, whooping cough and even polio. We no longer see these illnesses often because of mandatory childhood vaccination. I also want KDHE to retain the ability to enact all public health safety measures that are necessary to protect the public from the effects of communicable diseases, including severe illness and death. KDHE should be able to follow the best evidenced based practice in dealing with any communicable disease including mandatory quarantines. Quarantines are effective and necessary for outbreaks of measles, tuberculosis, ebola, and many other illnesses. I was on our COVID team in my district, and I was helping design our policies that helped mitigate the pandemic risks and I witnessed how well quarantining worked to prevent the spread of cases of COVID in classrooms when cases arose.

At the end of December 2023, a measles outbreak occurred in Philadelphia starting in an unvaccinated individual who had traveled out of the country. That individual then spread it to several other unvaccinated individuals and it then spread further in a daycare center because one of the confirmed cases attended day care disregarding quarantine and exclusion instructions (<https://www.phila.gov/2024-01-04-health-department-reports-additional-measles-exposures/>) If this bill passes, not only will we have more unvaccinated individuals, we will also be unable to enforce quarantines, which can lead to outbreaks like this in Kansas as well.

I have had students who could not be vaccinated due to medical conditions like cancer, and they rely on herd immunity by having high vaccination rates in those they are around. Without herd immunity those vulnerable children are at risk of serious illness and death. We must protect those who can't protect themselves.

**Please vote "NO" on SB 390 in order to continue to prevent outbreaks of childhood illnesses that put our children and our communities at risk.**

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Kansas Elementary School Nurse