



Healthy People Build Strong Communities

Kansas Association of Local Health Departments
715 SW 10th Avenue
Topeka, KS 66612
Phone: 785-271-8391
www.kalhd.org

Testimony on Substitute for SB 29

Submitted To

The House Health and Human Services Committee

By

Randy Bowman, Executive Director

Kansas Association of Local Health Departments (KALHD)

March 7, 2025

On behalf of the Kansas Association of Local Health Departments (KALHD) and our 100 member Health Departments, I appreciate the opportunity to provide this testimony on Substitute for Senate Bill 29. We are an opponent of this bill.

This bill seeks to amend the authority of county or joint boards of health and local health officers, restricting them to making only recommendations—rather than implementing necessary prohibitions—against public gatherings during infectious disease outbreaks. By doing so, this legislation would significantly limit the ability to respond effectively to contagious diseases, thereby increasing the risk of negative health outcomes for the citizens of Kansas.

The restrictions proposed in this bill are ill-advised. Current headlines make it clear that infectious diseases continue to pose a threat, particularly to those who choose not to protect themselves, their families, and their communities through available vaccinations. Outbreaks of measles, tuberculosis, and bird flu are currently occurring in the United States. While there have been no reported restrictions on public gatherings in these cases, such measures should remain an option in Kansas if circumstances warrant them to help contain the spread of disease.

Beyond domestic concerns, we must also consider global health threats. Since January 2025, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has issued Travel Health Notices urging enhanced precautions for Americans traveling to countries experiencing outbreaks of clade I Mpox, Ebola, and polio. These diseases could be brought back to Kansas by travelers, making it even more critical to preserve all available public health tools, including restrictions on gatherings when necessary.

While I acknowledge the concerns of the bill's proponents, I urge you to recognize that this legislation would not improve our ability to respond to public health threats. Please do not schedule any further consideration or action on this bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this discussion.