



March 7, 2025

Heather Braum, Senior Policy Advisor  
Kansas Action for Children  
Written-Only Opponent Testimony on Sub. for SB 29  
House Committee on Health and Human Services

Chairman Carpenter and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide opponent testimony in opposition to Sub SB 29, which **removes the authority of local health officials to prohibit public gatherings during infectious disease outbreaks and makes them recommendations only.**

While the Substitute for SB 29 version no longer includes the problematic policy changes that the original SB 29 had, we continue to oppose this bill because if it becomes law, Kansas communities facing another major infectious disease outbreak (like measles or bird flu) will no longer have access to a rare but important tool to limit public gatherings when absolutely necessary until a disease outbreak has passed. We believe this authority should remain with local governing bodies to respond to local health needs.

**But ultimately, we oppose Sub. for SB 29 because allowing disease to freely spread quickly gets costly – and harms children, particularly Kansas’ youngest.**

Take the disease measles, considered to be one of the most highly infectious diseases on the planet.<sup>1</sup> The disease spreads through the air when an infected person coughs or sneezes, and can remain in the air in a room for up to two hours after the person leaves.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, **“A person with measles can infect 9 out of 10 people around them if they are not protected.”<sup>3</sup>**

Large gatherings can easily turn into vectors for measles to quickly spread during an outbreak, especially in lower vaccinated communities. Under Sub. for SB 29, local health officials could only recommend against public gatherings, not prohibit them.

Research estimated that the public health response to a 2018-2019 measles outbreak in Washington state resulting in 72 infections cost approximately \$2.3 million.<sup>4</sup> The connected health care and

---

<sup>1</sup> World Health Organization. (2024). *Measles*. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/measles>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Centers for Disease Control (CDC). (2024). *About Measles*. <https://www.cdc.gov/measles/about/index.html>

<sup>4</sup> Pike, J., Melnick, A., Gastañaduy, P. A., et al. (2021). “Societal Costs of a Measles Outbreak.” *Pediatrics*. 147(4). <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2020-027037>

treatment costs are likely much higher as some measles cases require hospitalizations, and complications for measles include hospitalization for dehydration, pneumonia, ear infections, diarrhea, blindness, irreparable brain damage, immune amnesia,<sup>5</sup> and even death.<sup>6</sup>

While most of the population is already vaccinated against diseases like measles, **some children are too young to receive standard immunizations and are particularly vulnerable to these diseases, especially in areas with lower than recommended community vaccination rates.**

Outbreaks must be quickly stopped through infectious disease outbreak response tools before children become hospitalized, end up with lifelong health complications, or die from these diseases.

Unfortunately, we are seeing what happens when public health policies are relaxed, such as in the ongoing Texas measles outbreak where one child has died.<sup>7</sup> Initially, six cases were reported one month ago,<sup>8</sup> But as of March 5, 159 cases are now reported,<sup>9</sup> and the Texas outbreak has no end in sight. Individual cases have also popped up in multiple states across the country.<sup>10</sup> One case quickly can turn into a large, countrywide outbreak very quickly.

We are deeply concerned Kansas could see an infectious outbreak like measles or bird flu in the very near future, and local officials must have all tools available to them — even the rarely used ones like prohibiting public gatherings from occurring. For all these reasons, we respectfully request the Committee oppose Sub. for SB 29.

Thank you again for the opportunity to offer testimony in opposition to Sub. for SB 29. If I can be of further assistance, please contact me at [heather@kac.org](mailto:heather@kac.org).

---

### ***About Kansas Action for Children***

Kansas Action for Children is a nonprofit advocacy organization working to make Kansas a place where every child has the opportunity to grow up healthy and thrive. We work across the political spectrum to improve the lives of Kansas children through bipartisan advocacy, partnership, and information-sharing on key issues, including early learning and education, health, and economic security for families.

---

<sup>5</sup> Frederick, E. (2019). "How measles causes the body to 'forget' past infections by other microbes." *Science* <https://www.science.org/content/article/how-measles-causes-body-forget-past-infections-other-microbes>

<sup>6</sup> CDC. (2020). *Complications of Measles*. <https://www.cdc.gov/measles/symptoms/complications.html>

<sup>7</sup> Texas Department of State Health Services. (February 26, 2025). *Texas announces first death in measles outbreak*. <https://www.dshs.texas.gov/news-alerts/texas-announces-first-death-measles-outbreak>

<sup>8</sup> Texas Department of State Health Services. (February 5, 2025). *Measles Outbreak In Gaines County, Texas*. <https://www.dshs.texas.gov/news-alerts/measles-outbreak-gaines-county-texas>

<sup>9</sup> Texas Department of State Health Services. (March 4, 2025). *Measles Outbreak – March 4, 2025*. <https://www.dshs.texas.gov/news-alerts/measles-outbreak-march-4-2025>

<sup>10</sup> CDC. (February 28, 2025). *Measles Cases and Outbreaks*. <https://www.cdc.gov/measles/data-research/index.html>