



TESTIMONY HOUSE BILL 2094
House Committee on Health and Human Services

The Kansas Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics represents over 90% of the practicing pediatricians in the state. The Chapter presents this testimony in strong opposition to House Bill 2094.

Immunizations are one of the true success stories in the history of mankind. In fact, it is because they are so successful that we are here today. If we still had large numbers of children dying of measles, polio, meningitis and whooping cough it is unlikely we would be having parents wanting to refuse immunizations. But when we rarely see the tragic effects of these diseases - indeed many young parents today have never seen a single child with measles, chickenpox or the other ‘childhood diseases’- it is easy to see how they would be susceptible to the misinformation and fear mongering about immunizations that has become common in the media.

Let’s look at the facts. Immunizations are safe. The vast majority of studies have shown this and as we do more research, new studies continue to confirm this. In fact recently the English physician who claimed that the MMR vaccine was linked to autism has been shown to be a fraud who doctored his data and was in a financial arrangement with attorneys suing vaccine manufacturers. A child has a much greater chance of harm by contracting the infectious diseases that the vaccines prevent than by the vaccine itself.

It is important to balance personal freedom of choice with the safety of the community and our children. That is a balance that our country has looked at from its inception. An individual who chooses to run a stop sign puts others at risk. We understand this so we have laws that prohibit this action. An individual’s “freedom” to choose not to immunize a child puts other children and society at risk in much the same way. Not everyone that is vaccinated will develop immunity. Most vaccines will work in about 90-95% of the recipients. This means that even if a child is vaccinated there is a small chance they still are susceptible. Also many children are unable to receive vaccines because they are immune-compromised, such as a child receiving chemotherapy. Finally, very young children might not be eligible for the immunization yet. They are also susceptible.

Recently we have seen what happens when parents refuse to immunize their children. California is a state that allows a personal exemption. In 2008, San Diego experienced a recurrence of measles started by a child who was not immunized. What better place to look at this issue than in Britain, home of the MMR controversy. This country experienced a decline in immunization rates following the claim that MMR caused autism. Britain is now experiencing a dramatic increase in measles cases to the point it is now being called an epidemic by some health officials.

We know the importance of immunizations. We know what happens when parents refuse to vaccinate their children. The Kansas Chapter strongly opposes this bill for the sake and health of the children of our state.

KEY FACTS ABOUT IMMUNIZATIONS

1. Childhood infectious diseases are serious infections that can cause death or serious long term disabilities in many children.
2. Children are far more likely to be harmed by these infectious diseases than by the immunizations that prevent them.
3. Children not immunized increase the chance others will get the disease. This includes children too young to receive the vaccines or those medically unable to because they are immune-compromised such as individuals receiving chemotherapy.
4. We are seeing a resurgence of these diseases as more parents are mistakenly refusing vaccine for their children because of unfounded fears about vaccine safety. Recent outbreaks of pertussis and measles in California show this.
5. Recent studies have continued to show that vaccines are safe and not the cause of disorders such as autism. The physician who started the “autism scare” has now been shown to be a fraud that manipulated his data and had a financial connection to attorneys suing vaccine manufacturers.
6. School entry requirements for immunizations are one of the best means of increasing immunization rates.

Respectfully,

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