



Thomas L. Bell
President and CEO

TO: House Health and Human Services Committee

FROM: Chad Austin
Vice President of Government Relations

DATE: January 18, 2012

RE: HB 2094

The Kansas Hospital Association appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition to House Bill 2094.

HB 2094 would broaden the legal exemption for adults wishing to exempt their children from receiving vaccinations by allowing a parent or guardian the opportunity to decline the inoculation for reasons of conscience or personal beliefs. Currently, exemptions are only granted for medical or religious reasons. Vaccinations are crucial in preventing and in some cases eliminating disease. Diseases that once injured or killed thousands of children, have been eliminated completely and others are close to extinction—primarily due to safe and effective vaccines. For example, polio was once America’s most feared disease, causing death and paralysis. Due to vaccinations, polio has been eliminated in the United States. Smallpox vaccination eradicated that disease worldwide. Our children don’t have to get smallpox shots any more because the disease no longer exists in our country.

Vaccinating children protects those around us and saves lives. Unfortunately, children in our country still contract vaccine-preventable diseases. In fact, Kansas has seen resurgence of measles and whooping cough (pertussis) over the past few years due to a decrease in vaccinations. In 2010 the U.S. had over 21,000 cases of whooping cough reported and 26 deaths -- most in children younger than 6 months. Some babies are too young to be completely vaccinated and some may not be able to receive certain vaccinations due to severe allergies, weakened immune systems from conditions like leukemia or chemotherapy treatments. To help keep them safe, it is important that children who are able to get vaccinated are fully immunized. This not only protects our families, but also helps prevent the spread of these diseases to friends and loved ones.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.