

Testimony: House Bill 2094

House Health & Human Services Committee

HB 2094; regarding exemptions to required vaccines due to reason of conscience or personal belief

My name is Melissa Carlson. I am not associated with any group. I am a stay-at-home mother of two teenagers who are up-to-date on all vaccines.

I know parents who argue against immunization. They say something like, "Vaccines in general are a good idea, but until someone proves they are completely without risk I don't want my child having them."

I have two problems with that opinion that I want you to consider. First, nothing we do for our children is ever entirely risk free. Second, public policy should be based on good science.

When we encourage our children to play sports or walk the dog, when we send them to the bus stop for school, when we enroll them in clubs or classes we take a risk. From the minute they leave our bodies as mothers, we begin to risk. Asking for something to be 100% safe is an excuse. Some of the parents who object to vaccinations have good intentions, others are lazy. It is – I know, I've said it myself – a hassle to visit the doctor's office for some new requirement. You don't want to take the time or money or stress of your child's objections (a nice way to say, "freaking out in public"). Some parents would love the excuse that an exemption provides.

However, I have to ask if it's wise for public policy to depend on what is convenient. I believe good public policy is the result of research by experts – in this case, scientist and physicians. I reject the non-experts who appear so well organized on this issue. Everyone with a computer today feels educated, even celebrities with absolutely no health background like Jenny McCarthy and Jim Carrey.

Vaccines are a miracle of modern science, but only if everyone participates. I do not consider my parental rights to be violated if I am told by legitimate experts how to keep my children and the wider community safe. In fact, that is what I want. I am humble enough to request that someone better informed than I make this decision. I consider the parents who argue this point to be arrogant bullies who place their liberty to endorse pseudo-science ahead of their neighbors' well being.

Please lead a charge for scientific research and the long-standing role of public health departments. Reject any additional exemption.

Submitted by Melissa J. Carlson, Overland Park, Kansas, 1/17/2012