

ACTION ALERT

Mid America Immunization Coalition



MARCH 24, 2023

The Kansas Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee passed two bills this week that potentially weaken the existing safety net of vaccine requirements, putting us at risk for preventable disease. This marks the third straight session in which the Senate has considered anti-vaccination legislation. As we approach the last days for consideration of these measures, it is important that you contact your Senator and let him/her know that you oppose this legislation and express your concern for the impact on the health of Kansans.

If you reside in Johnson County, it is imperative that you contact your Kansas State Senator via email or phone and record your opposition. Both bills promote policies soundly rejected by Kansans in Nurture KC's 2022 scientific public opinion poll: [Kansas Vaccine Poll](#).

Find my legislator: https://openstates.org/find_your_legislator/

SB 315 – Requires childcare facilities and K-12 schools to grant religious exemptions to vaccination without questioning the sincerity of the religious beliefs. The legislation also repeals the meningitis vaccine requirement for college students in student housing. SB 315 was rejected in Committee on March 24 and reconsidered and passed on March 25. There is a substantial difference of opinion on the policy among Senators and your input is pivotal!

Key talking points:

1. Expansion of the religious exemption has the practical impact of essentially adding a new philosophical exemption category since the belief cannot be questioned. Reducing vaccine compliance results in more disease, particularly for vulnerable Kansans. The Kansas Health Institute's recent study highlights disease outbreaks in Kansas that have occurred under the existing requirements: [Vaccinations in Kansas Report](#).
2. Kansans favor tightening the religious exemption, not expanding it. In Nurture KC's 2022 scientific poll:
 - 61% want religious leader documentation
 - 65% want **both** parents to approve an exemption
 - 64% want there to be an **annual** exemption review
3. Repealing the meningitis vaccine requirement puts college students at unnecessary risk for a debilitating, deadly disease that is easily preventable with compliance.
4. Expanding exemptions makes a mockery of the religious exemption originally based on a fundamental, principled belief. This proposed policy prioritizes individual freedom at the expense of the health of all Kansans.

SB 314 – Prohibits KDHE from requiring the COVID-19 vaccine for childcare centers and K-12 schools.

Key Talking Points:

1. This is a solution in search of a hypothetical problem. KDHE has not proposed nor intends to propose a COVID-19 vaccine mandate.
2. The legislation sets a poor precedent in undermining KDHE's authority to determine vaccine requirements based on a rigorous, evidence-based process. To view the existing vaccine approval process, check out Nurture KC's [Understanding Vaccines](#)
3. This proposal flies in the face of Kansans' belief that KDHE is the best authority for setting the vaccine schedule with 85% of those polled supporting the authority of KDHE. 73% opposed having the legislature make vaccine schedule decisions.