



**Senate Committee on Public Health and Welfare  
Testimony in Opposition to Senate Bill 313  
Presented by Eric Stafford, Vice President of Government Affairs, Kansas Chamber**

**Tuesday, March 21, 2023**

Madam Chair and members of the committee, my name is Eric Stafford, Vice President of Government Affairs for the Kansas Chamber. The Kansas Chamber represents small, medium and large businesses of all industry segments across the state. We appreciate the opportunity to testify in opposition to Senate Bill 315 which prohibits employers from mandating any vaccination for their employees.

SB 315 amends the COVID 19 vaccination statute passed during the special session of 2021 and is another mandate on businesses operating in the state. SB 315 would prohibit businesses from making decisions based on the safety of their employees.

This Legislature passed policies in November's special session related to the Covid vaccine mandates implemented by the Biden administration. Prior to the mandate, employers were largely granting religious exemption. 97% of our members surveyed were not mandating the COVID vaccine. In January 2022, the US Supreme Court ruled OSHA does not have the authority without Congressional action to mandate the COVID vaccine. Even with that development, it is illogical to consider this bill which goes all the way to the extreme to say no vaccines can be required by and employer.

How are employers supposed to protect their employees who are required to travel internationally? Will employers be provided immunity caused by injuries or illness sustained through the course of employment overseas if they reject required vaccinations? And last, according to SHRM National, "Employers also have an obligation to accommodate an employee's sincerely held religious belief under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act (Title VII), unless the accommodation creates an undue hardship." Religious exemption protections are already offered by the federal government.

In closing, this is an unnecessary piece of legislation that places restrictions on Kansas businesses. Thank you for allowing us to testify in opposition to Senate Bill 315, and I'm happy to answer questions at the appropriate time.