



Kansas Hospital
ASSOCIATION

TO: Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee

FROM: Tara Mays, Vice President State Legislative Relations

DATE: February 15, 2024

RE: Senate Bill 391

The Kansas Hospital Association (KHA) appreciates the opportunity to submit written comments in opposition to Senate Bill 391.

Kansas hospitals remain committed to ensuring the safety of all patients, staff, and visitors entering a hospital facility. Kansas hospitals employ nearly 100,000 Kansans to provide quality, safe, and effective care in their communities. Protecting patients and staff from infectious disease is an important component of patient care as well as keeping the healthcare workforce healthy and safe to continue providing medically necessary and life-saving care to Kansans.

The KHA is opposed to Senate Bill 391 as we believe the bill would remove critical public health mitigation strategies and vaccination that keep Kansas citizens, including healthcare workers, safe from infectious disease and healthy to continue performing their jobs, contributing to the Kansas economy and keeping their families safe.

Evidence-based public health measures have been demonstrated throughout history to be effective at decreasing the transmission of infectious diseases and reducing their spread across a population. Although there were no treatments or vaccines available during the 1918 Spanish Flu pandemic, nonpharmaceutical interventions such as isolation and quarantine were shown to be effective where implemented. Quarantine dates back to the 14th century as a means to protect coastal cities from plague epidemics caused by ships arriving from infected ports.

Two hundred years ago local control of quarantine was so ineffective at containing cholera and yellow fever across the nation that Congress took action to pass federal quarantine legislation in the late 1870s. That legislation led the way for the Public Health Service Act and other interventions to protect citizens from morbidity and mortality resulting from infectious diseases. Smallpox was eradicated in 1980 because of widespread vaccination in combination with quarantine.

Public health interventions to stop the spread of highly contagious diseases are why Kansans and other citizens across the country do not suffer from the scourge of diseases like measles, hepatitis, polio, and other vaccine-preventable illnesses common in third-world countries. The protection afforded by public health interventions such as isolation, quarantine, testing, treatment and vaccination are foundational elements of a healthy state that allow Kansans to gather safely and live healthy and productive lives.

Stopping the spread of infectious diseases also keeps Kansas healthcare workers safe and able to provide the needed care we all rely on from our Kansas hospitals. We have seen in the recent past several instances of measles and polio outbreaks across the country that were quickly contained through effective public health measures that prevented widespread disease.

KHA opposes Senate Bill 391, and we thank you for your consideration of our written comments.