



February 15th, 2022

Written Testimony in Opposition to HB 2662

Chairwoman Kristey Williams and members of the K-12 Education Budget,

Thank you for allowing me an opportunity to provide written testimony in opposition to House Bill 2662. My name is Ali Hilton and I am the program director for the Mid America Immunization Coalition (MAIC), a program of Nurture KC. MAIC is comprised of community members and the public health sector, providing education and advocacy on the lifesaving importance of being immunized.

HB 2662 sets a precedent that would unravel the critical work that has nearly eradicated diseases like polio, hepatitis, measles, mumps and rubella. HB 2662 withdraws Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) as the authority that oversees the necessary childhood vaccination schedule for school aged children. This proposal runs counter to the wishes of an overwhelming majority of Kansans. Nurture KC commissioned a statewide survey, conducted by Public Opinion Strategies, to gauge public attitudes regarding routine vaccinations in Kansas. The Kansas immunization poll indicates 85% of Kansas voters believe the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) is the appropriate entity to set wellness vaccine policy for children in Kansas. More than 9 in 10 support existing vaccination requirements for K-12 schools and child care facilities and more than 9-in-10 Kansas voters (95%) believe taking vaccines for diseases like measles, mumps and polio is extremely or very important to maintaining good health. These majorities are bipartisan, with strong support among Republicans, Democrats, and independent voters. For a more detailed version of the polling results, please visit nurturekc.org.

If children are not vaccinated against easily preventable disease, schools become places for increased infection. In addition to the immediate health impact, there would be a disruption to the learning environment as well as an undermining of schools as a safe place for students. Decades of evidence proves the efficacy of these vaccines and current exemption processes are sufficient for those who should not be vaccinated. Withdrawing KDHE authority and discounting evidence and the public good takes us backward in protecting our children from preventable disease. Particularly for immunocompromised children, we must follow a culture of health that reduces their exposure to illness.

Vaccines are vital to disease prevention, alleviating much suffering and death. Let's continue to protect our children and communities by rejecting measures that dilute that impact against disease. Let's not

undo the progress and foresight of previous generations who experienced these deadly diseases and created systems to ensure that would never happen again.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ali Hilton', written in a cursive style.

Ali Hilton