



Senate Committee on Commerce
February 25, 2021

Dan Leong
IKC Chair

Chair Olson, Vice Chair Steffen, and Members of the Committee, on behalf of Immunize Kansas Coalition this written testimony **is submitted in opposition of Senate Bill 213**. Our mission is to protect Kansans from vaccine-preventable diseases. We oppose SB 213 because it would take away freedom from employers to protect their employees, customers, and patients and increase the risk of vulnerable Kansans exposure to vaccine-preventable diseases.

Vaccinations are among the greatest achievements of public health. Vaccinations have significantly decreased rates of vaccine-preventable diseases, protecting the lives and health of Kansans from serious diseases. Vaccines are safe and effective. The United States vaccine safety program closely and constantly monitors the safety of all vaccines.

By prohibiting employers from taking any adverse employment actions against employee because of the employee's vaccination status, SB 213 *takes away the freedom* for private businesses to decide what is in the best interest of their patrons and employees. Employers have the right to protect their employees and customers and establish employee qualifications, which can include health and safety standards. In fact, employers in our state have an obligation to provide a safe workplace for their employees and the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission allows companies to require influenza and other vaccines.

Of particular concern is that this bill would infringe on the rights of healthcare and long-term care facilities to implement employee vaccination requirements, as they see necessary, to protect their employees, patients and residents from vaccine-preventable disease. Without the freedom for employers to set requirements, many Kansans at high-risk for severe complications from vaccine-preventable disease, including infants, elderly, and immunocompromised individuals, would not be able to safely receive essential health services.

Professionally, I have significant experience in emergency preparedness in healthcare/public health and cancer control. Its bad business to limit employers on what may or may not be the next infectious disease disaster. Employers need flexibility to implement what is safe and effective to protect their employees and to remain financially solvent. Moreover, cancer patients undergoing treatment and are immunocompromised need protections (herd immunity with vaccine) from businesses and employers as many are not eligible for certain types of vaccines.

Thank you for the opportunity to present our concern. In summary, **we oppose SB 213** and are in favor of employers retaining the freedom to protect their employees, patients, and customers with vaccination requirements as they deem necessary.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Dan Leong'.

Dan Leong, IKC Chair
Immunize Kansas Coalition
Topeka, Kansas