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Healthy People Build Strong Communities

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Testimony of the Kansas Association of Local Health Departments (KALHD) to the

Senate Committee on Commerce

Opponent for SB 213 • February 25, 2021

Chairman Olson and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to supply written testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 213 regarding adverse employment actions being taken based on an employee's vaccination status. KALHD is a nonprofit association dedicated to strengthening local health departments for the purpose of improving and protecting the health of all Kansans.

Immunization-preventable diseases pose a significant risk to many in society and some occupations require staff that work around those who cannot receive immunizations, have weakened immune systems, or otherwise may face a significant risk of adverse outcomes (including further disease spread in society) if exposed to a disease that could be prevented via immunization. This bill would either end up with employers doing nothing on the disease containment front or having to take far more costly actions (such as using supplies and equipment to try and substitute for what an inoculation could more affordably provide).

Local health departments recognize the pull between individual rights and societal protections. Certain employers have compelling reasons related to safety (for those they work with and around) to want their employees immunized. SB 213 is far too broadly written to be good policy from a public health perspective and thus KALHD opposes SB 213 and asks that you not recommend it for passage.

Respectfully,

Dennis Kriesel

Executive Director, Kansas Association of Local Health Departments