



March 22, 2021

Senator Richard Hilderbrand  
Chair, Public Health and Welfare Committee  
Kansas Senate  
300 SW 10<sup>th</sup> St.  
Topeka, KS 66612

Senator Beverly Gossage  
Vice Chair, Public Health and Welfare Committee  
Kansas Senate  
300 SW 10<sup>th</sup> St.  
Topeka, KS 66612

Senator Pat Pettey  
Ranking Minority Member, Public Health and Welfare Committee  
Kansas Senate  
300 SW 10<sup>th</sup> St.  
Topeka, KS 66612

Dear Chairman Hilderbrand, Vice Chair Gossage, Ranking Member Pettey, and members of the Committee,

I am writing today on behalf of the Biotechnology Innovation Organization (BIO), a national trade association for the biotechnology industry, representing over 900 companies and academic institutions involved in the research and development of innovative healthcare, agriculture, industrial, and environmental biotechnology products. BIO membership includes vaccine developers and manufacturers who have worked closely with the public health community to support policies that help ensure access to innovation and life-saving vaccines for all individuals.

BIO and our member companies would like to express our **opposition to SB 212**, which would implement a process by which the Secretary of the Kansas Department of Health and Environment could deem specific immunizations unnecessary for school entry.

Immunizations are a triumph of public health. Over the past century, high childhood immunization rates have led to millions of lives saved, cases of disease averted, and costs to the health care system saved.

Vaccines are held to high regulatory standards, making them one of the most effective and safe forms of preventive medicine. They are extensively tested for safety and efficacy prior to going on the market and continue to be monitored after introduction to the public. Any concerning safety signals are examined and addressed by the FDA and CDC, and vaccines may even be pulled from the market if there are safety concerns. FDA approval and CDC recommendations for use of vaccines represent the gold



standard; BIO therefore supports the use of vaccines according to FDA's guidelines and CDC's immunization schedule.

Protection against infectious diseases depends upon community immunity, and therefore state policies should facilitate high immunization rates. High vaccination rates are especially critical for the protection of those who are unable to be vaccinated and to preventing unnecessary infectious disease outbreaks.

During the pandemic, state legislatures should do what they can to facilitate access to vaccines for those who wish to receive them, rather than making opting out of vaccination the easiest choice. As a secondary result of the pandemic, routine immunization rates have dropped among children, adolescents, and adults nationally.<sup>1,2</sup> As we return to our pre-pandemic routines, strong immunization rates are needed to avert outbreaks of other infectious diseases such as measles, pertussis, and influenza on top of COVID-19.

BIO and our member companies therefore oppose SB 212 because this legislation may have a negative impact on vaccination coverage in Kansas. We stand ready to help in any discussion of alternatives as well as to share our knowledge of activities and initiatives from around the country. Please feel free to contact me with any questions that may arise.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Patrick J. Plues".

Patrick J. Plues  
Vice President, State Government Affairs  
Biotechnology Innovation Organization

cc: Senator Molly Baumgardner  
Senator Renee Erickson  
Senator Cindy Holscher  
Senator Kristen O'Shea  
Senator Mark Steffen  
Senator Mike Thompson

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<sup>1</sup> Santoli JM, Lindley MC, DeSilva MB, et al. Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Routine Pediatric Vaccine Ordering and Administration — United States, 2020. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep* 2020;69:591–593. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm6919e2>

<sup>2</sup> Trost A, Young J, Donthi S, Becker L. How COVID-19 Has Impacted US Adolescent and Adult Vaccine Utilization. *Avalere Health* 1 Feb. 2021. <https://avalere.com/insights/how-covid-19-has-impacted-us-adolescent-and-adult-vaccine-utilization>