

## TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION OF SB 391

February 15, 2024

Chair Gossage, Vice Chair Erickson, Ranking Member Pettey and members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony with our concerns about SB 391. The Kansas Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics (KAAP) and its 400 pediatrician and other pediatric provider members have a shared goal: all infants, children, and adolescents in Kansas may grow safe and strong. With this goal in mind, we express our strong opposition to SB 391, a bill restricting the authority of the Secretary of Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) and local health officers in managing infectious or contagious diseases, including the repeal of the Secretary's quarantine authority.

Public health, as defined by the National Academy of Medicine, emphasizes creating conditions for a healthy society, guided by highly trained public health officers - professionals like physicians and nurses - who base decisions on scientific evidence, not public opinion. This bill, if passed, will limit the issuance of scientifically supported orders during outbreaks, a critical intervention for the safe management of physical contact and reduced spread of disease.

While we acknowledge the concerns about the economic and health impacts of quarantine, restricting the authority of public health officers and elected officials is not a solution. Highly infectious diseases like Ebola and Measles need rapid action within hours, not months, to prevent widespread transmission. The recent COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the necessity for swift and decisive action by public health officers to protect the health and well-being of all Kansans.

When public health officials lack the authority or cannot move quickly to control the spread of disease, there is an increased risk of transmission within the community, leading to larger and more widespread outbreaks. The absence of quarantine and other public health measures undermines effective contact tracing, strains healthcare systems, and contributes to public panic and fear.

The economic burden of an outbreak is substantial, with disruptions to businesses, increased healthcare costs, and potential long-term economic instability. Families face increased medical expenses, potential income loss, and disrupted work schedules as parents care for sick children. The educational system is disrupted when children miss

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school, affecting their academic progress. Communities bear the economic brunt with heightened demand for healthcare, emergency response services, and public health interventions. Local businesses and organizations experience disruptions due to employee absences, affecting productivity and contributing to financial losses. At the state level, managing an infectious disease outbreak poses challenges, with increased expenditures, strain on the public health infrastructure, and long-term fiscal implications.

It is with these negative consequences in mind that we strongly oppose this bill, and we urge you to vote no on SB391.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter. We are available to address any questions and stand ready to serve as a valuable resource on pediatric issues.

Respectfully,

Dena K. Hubbard, MD, FAAP  
Public Committee Chair  
Kansas Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics