

February 12, 2024

Re: SB390 and SB391 – OPPOSE



Dear Senators of the Public Health and Welfare Committee,

The Kansas Council of Health-System Pharmacy (KCHP) represents the inpatient pharmacy workforce — pharmacists, technicians, and support staff in the hospital, ambulatory, and other acute care settings, across the state of Kansas. KCHP unequivocally opposes the actions proposed by Senate Bills 390 and 391 due to the serious danger they pose to public health.

Many hospital pharmacists and technicians provide direct bedside care to patients. We rely on our employers to enforce vaccine requirements so that we do not inadvertently become a source of disease transmission when providing care to acutely ill patients who are already in a position of extreme vulnerability — they may be critically ill, immunocompromised, recuperating from surgery, or simply unvaccinated themselves. Our patients deserve a safe environment in which to recover. And, just as we are required to be formally licensed to do our work, vaccine requirements are one layer of a multi-faceted approach to assure patient safety and the trustworthiness of their healthcare providers.

Similarly, pharmacists — like all healthcare workers — deserve to be safe at work. Vaccine requirements amongst the entire healthcare workforce build a network of protection amongst and between those of us most likely to inadvertently become disease vectors. Healthcare workers are more likely than the general public to acquire high viral loads and experience high infectivity risk, putting our patients and our colleagues in harm's way. Employer vaccine requirements can help hold us accountable for high professional and safety standards, setting the bar at a height in accordance with one of the most trusted healthcare professions.

The tragic reality is that illnesses once nearly-eradicated are making a dramatic resurgence. In our workplaces, we are seeing patients with measles and mumps; while our collective memory of the horrors of these illnesses is fading (itself a testimony to the fact that vaccines and vaccine requirements work), pockets of preventable disease are reemerging and resulting in serious harm and fatalities. We are caring for patients we've only ever seen in textbooks... or in history books. Hospital-acquired infections are amongst the most severe and the most difficult to treat, but they are preventable with appropriate procedures, requirements, and enforcement mechanisms.

We do believe that our children, older adults, people with disabilities, or other groups already subject to health inequities at our hands — namely, Black and Brown individuals — do not deserve to bear the high cost of public health failures. Senate Bills 390 and 391 undermine the fundamental principles of public health, decimating our ability to mount an expert and evidence-based response to emergencies that endanger all of us. The Kansas pharmacy workforce in hospital *and* community practice across the state opposes SB390 and SB391 and we strongly urge you to oppose them as well.

Sincerely,

Zahra Nasrazadani, PharmD
Director of Government Affairs
Kansas Council of Health-System Pharmacy