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Thank you to the members of the committee for having this hearing and allowing myself and others the opportunity to speak on this issue. I am here today testifying in support of HB 2094. As a parent, I believe that decisions about the medical interventions given to children should be made by parents and not be mandated by the state. As a pharmacist, I do not question the value of vaccinations in the appropriate situations. It is also true that vaccinations are not without risk. In fact, U.S. law considers them to be “unavoidably unsafe.” There are people that have been seriously injured or killed by vaccines, and the National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program has paid out over \$2.3 billion for vaccine injuries since its inception in 1986. This fact was unknown to me when I began my pharmacy career, and once I was made aware of it I decided to do more research on vaccines. After many hours of reading research articles and visiting with parents of vaccine injured children, I now have concerns about the safety, effectiveness, and necessity of certain vaccinations. I cannot support the policy of mandating a medical product without proper exemption options that can cause serious injury or death as a side effect. One example is Hepatitis B vaccination. Chief among my concerns with this vaccine is that the universal adult Hepatitis B immunization policy implemented in France during the 1990’s was suspended after an increased incidence of multiple sclerosis was found among the healthy young adults that were vaccinated. The infection Hepatitis B is primarily spread by IV drug abusers and promiscuous sexual practices, yet this vaccine is mandated at birth and for kindergartners in Kansas as a condition of entry into our state’s public school system.

Under the current laws of our state, I, a healthcare professional, do not have the right to decline certain vaccinations for my children after I have done my own research and come to the conclusion that the benefits of a particular vaccine do not outweigh the risks. I am not permitted the right to make my own decision without discrimination or penalty regarding my children’s healthcare after reading peer-reviewed medical journal articles such as this one from the *Journal of Inorganic Biochemistry* that raises serious questions about the safety of the aluminum adjuvants that are used in vaccines. Or this analysis from the journal *Human and Experimental Toxicology* that found a positive correlation between a nation’s infant mortality rate and the number of vaccines required for children in the first year of life. After reading this article, I and other concerned parents may feel inclined to have our children vaccinated according to the immunization schedule of Sweden, which gives 12 doses of vaccines during the first year of life (compared to the 26 given in the United States) and has an infant mortality rate less than half of what it is in the U.S. Would this be possible? No, under the current laws of this state, my right to make this decision using reason, logic, and information gleaned from scientific journal articles is not permitted. In order to avoid a vaccination for my child that I may feel is dangerous, ineffective, or unnecessary, I must state that giving the vaccine violates the teachings of my religion. If I claim a religious exemption, I in all likelihood would have to decline all vaccines because the county and state health departments have the authority to challenge my religious exemption if I give my children some vaccines while declining others. The fact that some of these departments may choose to not challenge

religious vaccine exemptions is irrelevant. The authority exists, and the potential for abuse by an overzealous health department is there. It is my view that adding a conscientious belief exemption has the potential to actually increase vaccine coverage, as those parents claiming religious exemptions and declining all vaccinations would be able to selectively vaccinate their children if they so desired.

What HB 2094 proposes is not something that is unique. Currently, nineteen other states that represent over ½ of the population of the United States have a conscientious belief exemption to the state mandated vaccinations. Data provided by Kansans for Vaccine Choice shows that these states do not have higher rates of “vaccine-preventable” diseases. Are the citizens of Kansas somehow less-deserving of the same rights that are granted to the residents of Arizona, California, Idaho, Louisiana, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, New Mexico, North Dakota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Utah, Vermont, Washington, Wisconsin and neighboring states Arkansas, Colorado, Oklahoma, and Texas?

It is undeniable that vaccines do cause harm and death to some. Which individuals will be adversely affected by vaccines is impossible to predict. With this in mind, the policy of mandating vaccines for public school entry without allowing true informed consent and the right for parents to refuse is immoral in my view. Without a conscientious belief exemption, the state is essentially saying that those individuals harmed or killed by vaccines are “necessary sacrifices” and “acceptable losses” for the supposed “greater good.” This is a view that I would expect to find in Communist China or the former Soviet Union, not in the United States of America. There is a name for this philosophy- it is called “utilitarianism.” I find this view to be abhorrent, and an affront to the principles of freedom, liberty, and individual rights that this nation was founded upon. I find it somewhat hypocritical that our state government files a lawsuit in opposition to the portion of the federal healthcare law that mandates individuals to purchase health insurance while at the same time apparently has no problem mandating the youngest citizens of our state to purchase a healthcare product and be subjected to a medical procedure that does carry risks in order to attend our state’s public schools. I strongly urge the members of this committee to take a stand for parents’ freedom of choice about which medical interventions that their children will receive by approving HB 2094 and sending it to the full house for a vote.

Thank You,

Erik B. Leon, Pharm.D.