



January 9, 2012

Dear Honorable Members of the Committee on Health and Human Services,

I am writing to express my serious concern and opposition to House Bill No. 2094, “An Act concerning public health; relating to exemptions from the administration of vaccinations,” which would allow declination of vaccines for conscious or personal beliefs.

Vaccines have made a tremendous impact on the positive health of children, being among the greatest achievements of biomedical science and public health. In the United States, vaccination programs have made a major contribution to the elimination of many vaccine-preventable diseases and significantly reduced the incidence of others. Unvaccinated children are at increased risk of disease not only to themselves, but also create risk to other children and members of our society. The CDC provides the following comparison of Twentieth-century and Current Reported Morbidity, Selected Vaccine-Preventable Diseases in the United States.

EXHIBIT 1
Comparison Of Representative Twentieth-Century Annual Morbidity And Current Morbidity From Vaccine-Preventable Diseases, United States

Disease	Twentieth-century annual cases	2004 cases ^a	Percent decrease
Smallpox	48,164	0	100.00 ^b
Diphtheria	175,885	0	100.00 ^b
Measles	503,282	37	99.99 ^b
Mumps	152,209	236	99.85
Pertussis	147,271	18,957	87.13
Polio (paralytic)	16,316	0	100.00 ^b
Rubella	47,745	12	99.97
Congenital rubella syndrome	823	0	100.00 ^b
Tetanus	1,314	26	98.02
<i>H. influenzae</i> , type b and unknown (<5 years)	20,000	172	99.14

SOURCE: Adapted from U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “Achievements in Public Health, 1990–1999: Impact of Vaccines Universally Recommended for Children—United States, 1990–1998,” *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* 48, no. 12 (1999): 243–248; and information provided by Barry Sirotkin, statistician, National Immunization Program, CDC, personal communication, 14 February 2005.

^a Provisional data from CDC, “Notifiable Diseases/Deaths in Selected Cities Weekly Information,” *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* 53, no. 52 (2005): 1218.

^b Record low.

Roush, S. W. et al. (JAMA, 2007;298:2155-2163) in a study entitled “Historical Comparisons of Morbidity and Mortality for Vaccine-Preventable Diseases in the United States” came to the same conclusion finding a greater than 92% decline in cases and a 99% or greater decline in deaths due to diseases prevented by vaccines recommended before 1980 for diphtheria, mumps, pertussis, and tetanus. Further, the study reiterated that endemic transmission of poliovirus and measles and rubella

viruses has been eliminated in the United States; smallpox has been eradicated worldwide. Declines were 80% or greater for cases and deaths of most vaccine-preventable diseases targeted since 1980 including hepatitis A, acute hepatitis B, Hib, and varicella. Declines in cases and deaths of invasive *S pneumoniae* were 34% and 25%, respectively. The researchers concluded that the number of cases of most vaccine-preventable diseases is at an all-time low with hospitalizations and deaths also showing striking decreases. The study also speaks to vaccine safety, an unfounded concern that is likely behind this bill introduction. In addition, the researches emphasized that vaccine-preventable diseases have societal and economic costs in addition to the morbidity and premature deaths resulting from these diseases—the costs include missed time from school and work, physician office visits, and hospitalizations.

Locally, as Director of Health Services for Olathe Public Schools, I have seen firsthand the impact of vaccination on disease outbreak. During the 2010-2011 school year, our school nurses reported 36 cases of chicken pox (among 28,000+ students), a little more than 1 in 1000 students. In 2002, district wide we had 262 cases of chicken pox (enrollment at that time was approximately 22,000 students) or a little more than 1 case in every 100 students. More concerning are the number of parents who are claiming religious exemption for vaccinations in our district. The following chart depicts the increase in parents claiming exemptions for vaccines per year in our school district. Beginning 2010, the data was separated to reflect Religious Exemption separate from Medical:

Year	Vaccine Exemptions	% of Student Population
2010	339 (separated from Medical)	1.23%
2009	400	1.47%
2008	310	1.18%
2006	218	0.88%
2004	149	0.65%
2002	101	0.47%
2000	104	0.51%
1998	70	0.37%

According to Daniel Salmon, RhD, MPH, Director of Vaccine Safety with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, easy exemption process are associated with high exemption rates. Kansas has been in the lower risk category (<0.5% of the population unvaccinated due to reported exemption) and is reported to currently have a medium in intensity process for vaccine exemption. Salmon also reports that once a population has **1% or higher** of the population unvaccinated, they are at increased risk for disease outbreak. As the above chart depicts, Olathe Public Schools currently has over 1% of the population unprotected, placing us at risk for disease outbreak. Likely, many parents are currently abusing the Religious Exemption option, but opening up the state to an additional option will only encourage these numbers to swell.

It is worth noting that Johnson County had its first outbreak of measles in more than 7 years in the spring of 2011. The cases occurred in unvaccinated students. The outbreak impacted staff time and the health of students in multiple districts as one of the infected students exposed others at an extracurricular event. Now is NOT THE TIME to ease our state's vaccine exemption allowances.

References for vaccine information:

- CDC
 - <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccinesafety/index.html>
- FDA
 - <http://www.fda.gov/biologicsbloodvaccines/vaccines/default.htm>
- American Academy of Pediatrics
 - <http://www2.aap.org/advocacy/releases/autismfactsforparents.pdf>

- National Network for Immunization Information
 - <http://www.immunizationinfo.org/issues/general/vaccine-misinformation>
- John Hopkins Institute for Vaccine Safety
 - <http://www.vaccinesafety.edu/>
- Immunization Action Coalition
 - <http://www.immunize.org/safety/>

I urge you to carefully consider the public health ramifications of this bill and join me in opposition.

Sincerely,

Cynthia A. Galemore MEd, BSN, RN, NCSN
Director of Health Services
Olathe Public Schools
North Lindenwood Support Center
Olathe, KS 66062
(913) 780-8231 galemorec@olatheschools.org