



**Kansas School
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Testimony: House Bill 2094
House Health & Human Services Committee
January 6, 2012
By: Polly Witt, KSNO President

Chairman Landwehr and members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written comments on **House Bill 2094**. HB 2094 would add a new exemption—objection based on “personal beliefs”—to the current statutory immunizations required for school-aged children. Kansas already allows exemptions for religious and medical reasons. **The Kansas School Nurse Organization (KSNO) is opposed to the new exemption proposed in this bill.**

Enforcement of existing mandatory immunization requirements for children entering childcare facilities and schools has resulted in high immunization coverage levels in Kansas. These immunization rates lead to a lower incidence of vaccine-preventable diseases in our state and school days missed due to preventable diseases. Higher immunization rates also protect children who are not fully protected due to underlying medical conditions that prevent them from receiving the vaccine protection.

Childhood vaccinations are among the most significant public health success stories of all time. They have been credited for saving tens of thousands of lives each year in the U.S. alone. Requiring vaccines for school entry saves lives. Immunizations work, and are a safe and important strategy in the prevention of disease and protection of Kansas citizens.

Clear data show the real public health threat the proposed exemption represents. Studies have shown: States with personal exemptions had 90 percent more cases of whooping cough than states with stricter rules; Exempted children have been found to be 22-35 times more likely to get measles than vaccinated children; and, Rising rates of vaccine exemptions can undermine vaccine preventable disease elimination

Many people no longer see reminders of the severity and potential life threatening complications of these diseases. We must stay vigilant in our fight against vaccine preventable diseases and not become complacent. I encourage you to oppose this legislation for the health of our state. Thank you for your consideration of these comments.