



Senate Health and Human Services
Testimony by Andrew J. Widmer, MD, Texas Medical Association
Senate Bill 1024 by Sen. Lois Kolkhorst
March 22, 2023

Honorable Chair Kolkhorst, and Committee Members:

My name is Dr. Jimmy Widmer, and I'm a general internist practicing in Fort Worth. I offer my testimony today on behalf of TMA and the Texas Pediatric Society, respectfully in opposition to Senate Bill 1024 in its present form.

We share your conviction about protecting businesses and schools from future hindrances, and that begins with a robust public health infrastructure. In the alternative, we extend our appreciation and pledge to work with you on a committee substitute.

In short, implementing infectious disease protocols in response to an outbreak should be a thoughtful process that provides the least possible limitations on individuals while still protecting the health of communities. Texas physicians don't want an overstep in limiting infectious disease protocols, however there are some infectious disease measures that have proven the test of being extremely effective when needed, so they should not be permanently removed from our toolbox.

During the recent pandemic, Texas doctors and other health care professionals fearlessly answered the call, caring for millions of Texans with COVID-19 and grieving for the more than 90,000 Texans who lost their lives to COVID-19 ... including some of our own doctors and other health care professionals.

Based on these experiences and our Hippocratic Oath, we would like to respectfully request:

- Striking from SB 1024 its restructuring of routine and proven non-COVID vaccinations which are already in statute;
- Removal of new penalties against physicians and healthcare facilities – penalties we strongly oppose; and
- Removing all provisions from SB 1024 that hinder Texas doctors from prudently preventing the spread of infectious diseases in their own facilities.

Again, thank you for your work on SB 1024, and we look forward to working with you on crafting a substitute to it in the battle to keep Texas families safe from disease.