

RESOLUTION

Subject: Addressing the Rising Incidence of Pertussis and Protecting Vulnerable Infants in Kentucky

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Referred to: Reference Committee

WHEREAS, pertussis (whooping cough), a highly contagious respiratory disease caused by *Bordetella pertussis*, is experiencing a resurgence in the United States, with over 10,000 cases reported nationwide in 2024¹; and

WHEREAS, infants under 12 months of age are at the greatest risk for hospitalization, complications, and death from pertussis, particularly before they complete their primary DTaP (diphtheria, tetanus, acellular pertussis) vaccination series⁴; and

WHEREAS, the CDC recommends maternal Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria, acellular pertussis) vaccination during every pregnancy, ideally between 27–36 weeks gestation, to provide passive immunity to newborns, yet uptake rates remain suboptimal in many states, including Kentucky³; and

WHEREAS, pertussis vaccination coverage in adults and adolescents remains below national targets, decreasing herd immunity and increasing risk for transmission to vulnerable populations; and

WHEREAS, Kentucky has historically lagged behind national averages in adult Tdap vaccination rates, which may contribute to greater community spread and increased infant exposure; and

WHEREAS, two unvaccinated infants have died from whooping cough in the last six months and are the first whooping cough-related deaths in Kentucky since 2018²; and

WHEREAS, recent state data and public health reports highlight the need for increased awareness, education, and immunization efforts targeting both expectant mothers and close contacts of infants; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that KMA advocate for increased public education campaigns and provider-level interventions to improve maternal diphtheria, tetanus, acellular pertussis (DTaP) vaccination rates during pregnancy; and be it further

RESOLVED, that KMA support statewide efforts to improve surveillance and timely reporting of pertussis cases, particularly among infants; and be it further

RESOLVED, that KMA work with state legislators and public health officials to prioritize pertussis prevention as a public health concern and support funding for immunization access and education initiatives across Kentucky.

References:

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2025, April 22). Pertussis cases reported to CDC – United States, 2025. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/pertussis/php/surveillance/index.html>
2. WDRB News Staff. (2025, June 6). *Health officials say 2 Kentucky infants have died from whooping cough in last 6 months*. https://www.wdrb.com/news/health-officials-say-2-kentucky-infants-have-died-from-whooping-cough-in-last-6-months/article_71a62c1f-4a1d-454d-8bb1-bf140b6eb81e.html
3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2023). Pregnant? Get Tdap in your third trimester. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/pertussis/pregnant/mom/get-vaccinated.html>
4. Winter, K., Glaser, C., Watt, J., & Harriman, K. (2014). Pertussis epidemic—California, 2014. MMWR. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, 63(48), 1129–1132 <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6348a2.htm>