

Testimony in Support of HB 5504

Dear Senator Abrams, Representative Steinberg and members of the Public Health Committee,

The CT Chapter of the American College of Physicians supports HB 5044 and appreciates your efforts to improve immunization rates in Connecticut and protect our most vulnerable citizens by making vaccine requirements stricter and removing non-medical exemptions.

We share the position of the American College of Physicians, who published a policy statement in 2015 supporting the immunization of all children, adolescents, and adults, according to the recommendations and standards established by the U.S. Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), National Vaccine Advisory Committee (NVAC), and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Further the policy supports state laws designed to promote all recommended immunizations and calls on states to pass legislation to eliminate any existing exemptions, except for medical reasons, from their immunization laws.

Allowing exemptions based on non-medical reasons poses a risk both to the unvaccinated person and to public health, as intentionally unvaccinated individuals can pose a danger to the public, especially to individuals who cannot be vaccinated for medical reasons. Physicians should help educate patients and parents about the risks of vaccine preventable diseases and the safety and effectiveness of vaccines. Outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases have been linked to communities of unvaccinated and undervaccinated individuals.ⁱ ⁱⁱ Studies indicate that the easier it is to receive an exemption, the higher the rate of exemptions in a particular state.ⁱⁱⁱ ^{iv} ^v As the number of exemptions increases, the risk of vaccine-preventable disease has been found to increase.^{vi} Exemptions from evidence-based immunization requirements should be limited to medical indications in order to protect the public's health.

While we are generally supportive of the language in HB550, we recommend the following changes to remain in line with current medical practice and immunization requirements.

1. Sec 1 (a) Second immunization for measles is now recommended and required prior to entry into Kindergarten (not seventh grade)
2. Sec 1 (a)(5) referencing pertussis after age 6 should be removed. Pertussis is now given through adulthood in the Tdap vaccine (and required for 7th grade).
3. Sec 6 (3) add language after "his or her discretion" such as "that is supported by currently accepted evidenced based medicine" or similar
4. Specify that the form for medical exemptions be submitted to the child's school, their local health department and the Department of Public Health

Respectfully submitted,

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ⁱ Omer SB, Salmon DA, Orenstein WA, deHart MP, Halsey N. Vaccine refusal, mandatory immunization, and the risks of vaccine preventable diseases. *N Engl J Med.* 2009;360(19):1981–1988

ⁱⁱ Glanz, Jason M.; Narwaney, Komal J.; Newcomer, Sophia R.; Daley, Matthew F.; Hambidge, Simon J.; Rowhani-Rahbar, Ali et al. (2013): Association between undervaccination with diphtheria, tetanus toxoids, and acellular pertussis (DTaP) vaccine and risk of pertussis infection in children 3 to 36 months of age. In *JAMA pediatrics* 167 (11), pp. 1060–1064. DOI: 10.1001/jamapediatrics.2013.2353.

ⁱⁱⁱ Wang E, Clymer J, Davis-Hayes C, Buttenheim A. Nonmedical exemptions from school immunization requirements: A systematic review. *AJPH.* Nov 2014;104:e62-e84.

^{iv} Stadlin S, Bednarczyk RA, Omer SB. Medical exemptions to school immunization requirements in the United States — association of state policies with medical exemption rates (2014-2011). *J Infect Dis.* 2012;206:989-92.

^v Omer SB, Pan WK, Halsey NA, et al. Nonmedical exemptions to school immunization requirements: secular trends and association of state policies with pertussis incidence. *JAMA.* 2006;296(14):1757–1763.

^{vi} Feikin DR, Lezotte DC, Hamman RF, Salmon DA, Chen RT, Hoffman RE. Individual and community risks of measles and pertussis associated with personal exemptions to immunization. *JAMA.* 2000;284:3145-50.