

To the members of the committee:

My name is Meg Overbagh, I live in Campton, NH. I am a NH native, a licensed pharmacist of nearly 15 years, and I am additionally licensed for vaccine administration. I also am certified in antimicrobial stewardship by the Society of Infectious Disease Pharmacists.

I am submitting this testimony to oppose HB 524. This bill is a short-sighted measure that will greatly endanger the health of not only our children, but of all NH residents. Public health is so, so important and attempts like this to attack this critical safety net are frankly shameful. The NHVA is, in my opinion, the crown jewel of public health in the state and is a source of pride for me as a resident and a healthcare provider. It is frankly appalling to me that the government would want to destroy such a successful and important program. To quote directly from the NHVA 2024 annual report:

*New Hampshire's Universal Purchase Program ensures that every child who enters a doctor's office, clinic, or hospital can receive recommended vaccines at no cost. More providers have been able to offer vaccination services because they are no longer required to finance the up-front costs of vaccines or be burdened with complex ordering systems. As a result, New Hampshire has one of the highest vaccination rates in the country, and consistently achieves higher vaccination rates than the U.S. as a whole. The program allows vaccines to be purchased from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention which saves insurers and TPAs nearly 30% as the vaccines are not purchased on the open market.*

I do not think that the authors of this bill truly appreciate the massive burden that will be shifted to patients, parents, and healthcare providers if this bill is passed. I work in healthcare. I want to work on maximizing patient care, and making sure that all our patients are given the very best quality clinical care. I do not want to spend any more time than I already do worrying about the logistics of vaccine purchasing, transportation, and storage. Virtually every clinic will need to upgrade their expensive medical grade refrigerators to hold at least twice the vaccine supply. Hospitals and health systems will be forced to purchase vaccines through their usual wholesalers and would not reap the bulk purchasing discounts that the NHVA is able to receive. Not only will this drive up costs all around, it will end up with fewer children being vaccinated. You can assume that commercial insurers will pick up the costs, but this may not necessarily be the case, especially for patients with complex medical needs. An insurance company may deny coverage for a vaccine that is indicated for a medically fragile child, and now that family has to pay yet another medical bill.

Vaccines are a triumph of science. Vaccines not only prevent acute infectious illness, they can also prevent cancer. They are truly a modern miracle and are unfortunately have become a victim of their own success. We no longer fear catching polio in the public swimming pool, and parents do not typically worry about their children going blind or deaf from the measles or suffocating to death from a diphtheria pseudomembrane.

We should be grateful that our state made such a smart commitment in 2002 to the health and safety of our children, and of all Granite Staters, with the founding of the NHVA. We must continue to do the right thing by our children and protect access to live-saving vaccines.

Thank you.

Meg Overbagh, PharmD, RPh