

Health, Human Services and Elderly Affairs

Chairman MacDonald

Vice Chair Liza Mazur

Clerk Susan DeLemus

Good morning, Chairman MacDonald, Vice Chair Mazur and members of the committee:

My name is Pamela DiNapoli, PhD, RN, I am the current president of the NH School Nurses Association and am a school nurse. As a nurse with over 40 years of pediatric experience, I know the value of routine immunizations as primary prevention against childhood vaccine preventable illness producing lifetime immunity against most of these diseases and near eradication of many of these illnesses.

I am not here today to lecture you on the science of immunity or of vaccine safety. I did this as a professor at UNH in the Department of Nursing to countless nursing students who now know and practice with this evidence. Instead, I would like you to consider two other very important facts related to routine immunization requirements for children

First is the cost of health care. One of the primary drivers of poverty in this state is the cost of healthcare coverage and medical debt. We know that individuals are choosing to forego health insurance because of the premium costs. Without quality preventative services like routine immunization programs could result in financial erosion in families due to catastrophic and unexpected medical expenses, not to mention loss of income due to caregivers missing work. Vaccines significantly reduce direct health care expenditures by preventing diseases before they occur. This preventive approach is much more cost-effective than treatment-based strategies. For instance, routine childhood immunizations in the United States from 1994–2023 are estimated to have prevented around 508 million cases of illness, 32 million hospitalizations, and 1.13 million deaths. Translated to dollars, this prevention results in approximately \$540 billion in direct medical cost savings, with almost \$2.7 trillion in total societal savings due to illness prevention. This calculation means that every \$1 spent on general childhood immunization resulted in a savings of approximately \$11.

The second important point is related to the education of children. Healthy children will experience fewer disruptions in their academic progress. Children who are not vaccinated will be excluded from school should an outbreak occur like has been seen in 17 states in the United States and could increase should transmission increase in unvaccinated children and adults. We know that children with uninterrupted schooling have better academic performance and higher educational achievement, leading to greater productivity in later life.

In short, we not only have strong medical evidence of the value of childhood immunizations; we also know they are one of the best investments in economic stability in NH at a time when poverty is a major concern for NH families. As a matter of social justice and as legislators elected by the people of NH please do not support HB 1811 and bring an end to the discourse leading to vaccine hesitancy and the consequences thereof.

Thank you

