



AMERICAN ATHEISTS

February 4, 2026

The Honorable Rep. Wayne MacDonald
Chair, Health, Human Services and Elderly Affairs Committee
107 North Main Street
Concord, New Hampshire 03301

Re: OPPOSE HB 1811, Endangering Public Health by Allowing Non-Medical Exemptions to Vaccine

Dear Chairperson MacDonald and Members of the Health, Human Services and Elderly Affairs Committee:

American Atheists, on behalf of its constituents in New Hampshire, writes in opposition to HB 1811, a harmful bill that will needlessly endanger the lives of New Hampshire residents. The complete removal of vaccine requirements for child care facilities and public schools proposed by this bill will harm evidence-based efforts to prevent the transmission of serious diseases, including polio, mumps, rubella, measles, and future pathogens. Vaccination is a vital public health measure, and we support vaccination requirements based on medical best practices for the benefit of everyone. We strongly urge you to reject this dangerous bill.

American Atheists is a national civil rights organization that works to achieve religious equality for all Americans by protecting what Thomas Jefferson called the “wall of separation” between government and religion created by the First Amendment. We strive to create an environment where atheists are accepted as members of our nation’s communities and where bigotry against our community is seen as abhorrent and unacceptable. We promote understanding of atheists through education, outreach, and community-building, and work to end the stigma associated with being an atheist in America. American Atheists objects to efforts that subordinate the health and well-being of all to the religious beliefs of a few.

Public health experts believe no exception should be made to neutral immunization requirements that protect public health. The utter abandonment of vaccination efforts proposed by HB 1811 would unnecessarily endanger everyone to accommodate the religious or philosophical beliefs of a few. This is unacceptable from both a medical and moral perspective. Successful population immunity to disease depends upon a significant level of

AMERICAN ATHEISTS

225 Cristiani Street • Cranford, NJ 07016-3214
(908) 276-7300 • www.atheists.org

vaccination, with some diseases requiring at least a ninety-five percent vaccination level to prevent mass outbreaks.¹ Because some individuals have legitimate medical conditions that prevent them from receiving life-saving vaccinations, it is imperative that everyone who is physically capable of receiving a vaccine stay up-to-date.

Non-medical exemptions place vulnerable individuals and entire communities at significant risk for contracting debilitating and deadly diseases. For example, children who are exempt from immunization requirements are thirty-five times more likely to contract measles² and nearly six times more likely to contract pertussis³ compared to immunized children. History demonstrates that outbreaks are more common in communities that are unsupportive of vaccinations.

Measles is one vaccine-preventable disease that has plagued multiple religious communities that are either hesitant to vaccinate or completely opposed to vaccination.⁴ States across the country are currently battling unprecedented outbreaks of measles. Just last year in Texas, over 750 people became dangerously ill after contracting measles, 57 people were hospitalized, and, tragically, two school-aged children perished.⁵ Seventeen states have all confirmed measles outbreaks this year and forty-four states reported measles cases in 2025.⁶ HB 1811 would remove the tools New Hampshire will need should this crisis come to the state.

In addition to recklessly endangering public health, HB 1811 would create a special privilege for residents of New Hampshire who practice certain religions. At a time when nearly one in three Americans is religiously unaffiliated,⁷ this proposal seeks to adjust state law in favor of adherents of a specific religious belief system. As a result, nonreligious residents of New Hampshire and those whose religious beliefs do not prevent them from following medical best practices will bear the burden of increased consequences from even a small

¹ Nearly 40 Million Children Are Dangerously Susceptible to Growing Measles Threat, Ctr. for Disease Control (Nov. 23, 2022), <https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2022/p1123-measles-threat.html>.

² Salmon DA, Haber M, Gangarosa EJ, Phillips L, Smith NJ, Chen RT. *Health consequences of religious and philosophical exemptions from immunization laws: individual and societal risk of measles*. JAMA.1999;282:47-53.

³ Feikin DR, Lezotte DC, Hamman RF, Salmon DA, Chen RT, and Hoffman RE. *Individual and Community Risks of Measles and Pertussis Associated With Personal Exemptions to Immunization*. JAMA 2007;284:3145-3150.

⁴ See, e.g., Genes, N., *Measles in Boston: Collision of Church and State*, Science and Journalism (June 20, 2006), http://medgadget.com/2006/06/measles_in_bost.html; *Vaccination Fear Causes Measles Spate*, CBS News (Aug. 1, 2006), http://www.cbsnews.com/2100-500368_162-1857987.html.

⁵ Devi Shastri, *The U.S. Is On The Verge of Losing Its Measles Elimination Status*, PBS News (Jan. 20, 2026), <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/science/the-u-s-is-on-the-verge-of-losing-its-measles-elimination-status>.

⁶ *Measles Cases and Outbreaks*, Ctr. for Disease Control (last updated Jan. 23, 2026), <https://www.cdc.gov/measles/data-research/index.html>.

⁷ Smith, G. A. (2021, December 14). *About three-in-ten U.S. adults are now religiously unaffiliated*. Pew Research Center. Available at <https://www.pewforum.org/2021/12/14/about-three-in-ten-u-s-adults-are-now-religiously-unaffiliated>.

percentage of the population failing to vaccinate, refusing to follow mask mandates, or test for infectious disease after exposure. No New Hampshire should be subject to harm or illness based on the religious beliefs of a classmate, colleague, or neighbor.

The spread of infectious diseases threatens every aspect of American life, as demonstrated during the COVID-19 pandemic. The best and most reliable tools available to combat the utter chaos that occurs during such an outbreak and protect human life are mandatory vaccination with no non-medical exemptions, mask mandates, and widespread testing. HB 1811 would needlessly endanger vulnerable New Hampshire residents and the public by permitting the necessary population immunity levels to decline and risking the otherwise preventable resurgence of dangerous and deadly disease. We strongly urge you to reject this bill.

Should you have any questions regarding American Atheists' opposition to HB 1811, please contact me at vanderson@atheists.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Victoria Anderson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Victoria" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Anderson".

Victoria Anderson
State Policy Specialist
American Atheists