

I strongly oppose HB 1811, that would eliminate required vaccinations for school and childcare enrollment. Immunization requirements are not arbitrary rules, they are a cornerstone of public health that protect children, families, educators, and entire communities from preventable and potentially life-threatening diseases.

Vaccines have dramatically reduced and in some cases nearly eliminated diseases such as measles, polio, whooping cough, and meningitis. These illnesses are not minor childhood inconveniences; they can cause pneumonia, brain swelling, lifelong disability, and death. When vaccination rates drop, outbreaks return. We have already seen this happen in communities where immunization coverage declined, resulting in avoidable hospitalizations and public health emergencies.

School and childcare settings are environments where germs spread quickly. Young children share toys, have close contact, and often cannot consistently follow hygiene practices. Vaccination requirements create a protective shield around these settings, reducing the likelihood that a single case of disease turns into a widespread outbreak. Removing these requirements weakens that protection and increases risk not only for unvaccinated children, but for everyone.

Importantly, not all children and adults can be vaccinated due to medical conditions such as immune disorders, cancer treatment, or severe allergies. These individuals depend on high community vaccination rates for protection a concept known as community or herd immunity. When vaccination becomes optional, we endanger those who are medically vulnerable through no choice of their own.

This issue also affects teachers, daycare workers, school staff, and families who may have infants, elderly relatives, or immunocompromised loved ones at home. Public policy should not place these individuals in preventable danger.

On a personal note, I have a 15-month-old granddaughter enrolled in daycare. I worry deeply about her health and well-being if she is exposed to children who are not vaccinated. Even vaccinated children are not 100% protected, and some diseases are especially dangerous for very young children. No grandparent, parent, or caregiver should have to fear that a preventable disease could harm their child simply because basic safeguards were removed.

Vaccination requirements for school and childcare are about responsibility to one another. They are evidence-based, long-standing measures that save lives, prevent suffering, and reduce healthcare costs. Weakening these protections puts ideology ahead of children's health and community safety.

I urge you to reject HB 1811 and uphold policies that keep our schools and childcare environments safe for all.