



Five Reasons to Support Passage of HF 393 and SF 380

HF 393 and SF 380 propose strengthen Minnesota's school and child care requirements by requiring parents/guardians receive vaccine information from a healthcare provider before choosing to opt out through a personal belief exemption for their child. Here are just five of the many reasons it should receive broad bi-partisan support.

- 1. Minnesota's immunization requirements are compromised by having one of the most lenient opt-out provisions in the nation.** Current state law requires a physician's signature on vaccination documentation or a medical exemption. However, parents seeking a conscientious exemption need only submit a signed and notarized statement. This makes it is easier for a parent to enroll their child without a vaccination then it is to have them vaccinated.
- 2. Reliable information about vaccines provided by a medical professional is important to parental decision-making.** Adding a requirement to receive information from a healthcare provider will help parents who would have chosen an exemption out of convenience to reconsider. It may also help address unanswered questions about vaccine safety. Parents who ultimately decide not to have their child vaccinated would still be able to obtain a legal exemption; this bill will not take away that choice.
- 3. Studies have shown that states with clusters of children exempt to vaccination requirements are at higher risk for outbreaks of vaccine-preventable disease.^{1,2}** While Minnesota's rates of non-medical exemptions are low (around 1.6%), there are counties in the state where these rates are 1.5 to 2 times the statewide average. This can lead to outbreaks of diseases, such as in 2013 when 14 cases of varicella (chickenpox) swept through a central Minnesota school; 8 of the cases were unvaccinated due to a conscientious belief exemption. In addition, a 2011 outbreak of 21 cases of measles in Hennepin County included 7 of 9 cases who were age-eligible to be vaccinated, but weren't due to parents' concern over vaccine safety issues.³ A visit to a healthcare provider could have answered their questions.
- 4. Vaccines work and they are safe!** An analysis of over 1,000 studies by the independent Institute of Medicine found that side effects from vaccines are usually mild and short lasting.⁴ Serious side effects from vaccines are so rare that it is hard to tell if vaccines actually cause those side effects or some other factor.
- 5. Strengthening Minnesota's personal belief exemption process is an issue of parents' rights.** Nearly 8 of 10 Americans surveyed recently made it clear that they want vaccines to be required before attending school or day care.⁵ Parents should be able to send their children to these places, as well as other public spaces, without fear of inadvertently exposing that child to vaccine-preventable diseases because of the decisions made by other parents.

¹ Nonmedical vaccine exemptions and pertussis in California, 2010. *Pediatrics* 2013; 132(4):624–630.

² Geographic clustering of nonmedical exemptions to school immunization requirements and association with geographic clustering of pertussis. Omer SB, et al, *American Journal of Epidemiology*, 2008; 168:1389–96.

³ An outbreak of measles in an undervaccinated community [in Minnesota]. Gahr P, DeVries AS, Wallace G, et al. *Pediatrics*. July 2014; 134(1):e220–e228.

⁴ Adverse Effects of Vaccines – Evidence and Causality. Institute of Medicine, August 2011. www.iom.edu/Reports/2011/Adverse-Effects-of-Vaccines-Evidence-and-Causality.aspx

⁵ Poll: Majority of Americans want vaccines to be required as measles outbreak grows, February 23, 2015; www.cnn.com/2015/02/23/health/vaccine-poll/