

Good Afternoon, Chairman Weisz and members of the Human Services Committee. My name is Tracie Newman and I am a pediatrician, have a Master's Degree in Public Health, am a member of the Fargo Public School's Board of Education, and mother of three. I am here today testify in opposition to House Bill 1320.

Vaccines are arguably the 20<sup>th</sup> century's most successful public health achievement. Vaccines prevent disease in those who receive them and protect those most vulnerable who cannot be vaccinated (infants, immunocompromised). The American Academy of Pediatricians supports laws and regulatory measures that require certification of immunization to attend child care and school as a sound means of providing a safe environment for attendees and employees of these settings.

All 50 states in our country have legislation requiring specific vaccines for students and most allow exemptions. As you know, ND allows exemptions for medical, religious, and philosophical reasons. School Vaccination laws have played a key role in the prevention and control of vaccine preventable illness in North Dakota and The United States. Research has shown that school immunization mandates are the main driving factor leading to higher immunization rates. I certainly can attest to this, in my clinical duties, when children come in every Fall for their shots. This time allows for valuable screening and parental education as well.

Children who are not immunized, are more than 35 times more likely to contract measles and nearly 6 times more likely to contract pertussis compared to immunized children. Both illnesses I have diagnosed and managed in children. My own daughter contracted Chicken Pox at the age of 9 months from exposure to an older, unvaccinated child. Too young to be vaccinated herself, we had to watch her suffer needlessly and almost require hospitalization. As vaccines have become a victim of their own success, it is worth remembering that all of the diseases we currently vaccinate for still circulate in the world. In 2019, 1282 cases of confirmed measles occurred in 31 states, the most since 1992 and most cases were unvaccinated children.

Years of medical research have proven and reproved the safety and efficacy of vaccinations and the US long-standing vaccine safety program carefully monitors immunization safety. While most states are working to enhance their immunization laws, HB 1320 would be a major step backward to public health and the wellbeing of North Dakotans.

As North Dakota leaders, our priority should be putting children first. Children in our community often don't have a voice. As a School Board member of one of our state's largest districts and pediatrician, I have made it my life's work to be that voice. I believe strongly we must provide children with a safe learning environment in which to thrive, particularly for medically vulnerable children or those with special needs. Fargo Public Schools strongly opposes this Bill. Superintendent Rupak Gandhi stated: "I have had the fortune of working for three school districts in three different states during my career, which has allowed me to learn from a wide variety of experiences. I have always appreciated the importance of immunizations supported by the ND Legislature as it promotes a safe environment for all students and staff. During the past year, we have learned that students and staff have a safety responsibility to themselves and to their community. School immunization requirements help fulfill that obligation."

House Bill 1320 would put children and others across North Dakota at risk for preventable disease and death. Vaccines work and are safe – please oppose House Bill 1320. Thank you for your time and service.