

Testimony to the House Human Services Committee on HB 1377
Testimony by Barbara Frydenlund Rolette County Public Health District Administrator

Good afternoon, Chairman Weisz and members of the House Human Services Committee. My name is Barbara Frydenlund, and I am the Nurse Administrator for Rolette County Public Health District. I am offering this testimony today in opposition of HB 1377.

The Importance of Vaccines CDC statistics demonstrate dramatic declines in vaccine-preventable diseases when compared with the pre-vaccine era. Immunizations are among the most cost-effective and successful public health interventions.

As you are aware, there are several vaccine preventable diseases. Many of these diseases have never been seen by today's healthcare providers and parents, in part because we have been actively educating parents and guardians and vaccinating children for several years.

Families who claim exemptions from immunization mandates for any reason are at increased risk of developing a vaccine-preventable disease. In fact, children in families who have been granted a vaccine exemption are more than 35 times likely to contract measles and nearly six times more likely to contract pertussis. In addition, persons who claim philosophical or religious exemptions create risk for their community because unvaccinated or under-vaccinated persons can transmit disease.

Currently 15 states allow personal belief exemptions to vaccination, but 45 states permit religious exemptions. Given the need to assure community herd immunity persists, having more families claim exemptions can jeopardize the safety of those who are immunocompromised and could enable outbreaks of preventable illnesses like measles to occur in this state and country. It is for this reason that vaccine champions like Dr. Richard Pan, who is both a pediatrician and legislator in California, has worked to remove both philosophical and religious exemptions in that state, leaving only medical exemptions in place. The question remains if a state should oversee the approval of medical exemptions to ensure their legitimacy. At the end of the day it is the responsibility of the trained medical community to complete their due diligence to ensure that children and adults do not succumb to life-threatening illnesses preventable by vaccines.

It has been my public health experience and my connection to local schools that the limited number of parents and guardians in my service area who sign the philosophical exemption do so strictly for convenience of avoiding a clinic appointment to enable their child to receive age-appropriate immunizations. **I am in no way against medical exemptions to vaccine,** but I am very much against false exemptions and exemptions of convenience.

Vaccinations not only help protect children, but also protect the broader community by minimizing the spread of disease. It is the responsibility of parents, guardians, and the healthcare providers to protect the health and safety of children. ALL CHILDREN, including those with bona fide medical exemptions, who attend public daycare facilities and schools have the right to be protected from vaccine preventable disease.

Thank you for allowing me to share my experience as a Registered Nurse and mother of two fully vaccinated children. Please follow the science of health and spare future generations from walking through cemeteries only to note the deaths of young children who lost their lives to vaccine preventable diseases.

I urge a **DO NOT PASS recommendation on HB 1377.**

Sincerely,

Barbara Frydenlund, RN
Nurse Administrator
Rolette County Public Health District