

## HB 1469 Testimony

Human Services Committee

January 25, 2021

Chairman Weisz and Esteemed Members of the Human Services Committee,

My name is Danielle Pinnick. I am a public health professional, who for the last several years has focused on immunizations, maternal and child health, and health policy. I was born and raised in Minot, and have lived in Fargo since 2005, where I currently reside with my husband and two children. Today, I would like to address you as a mother and as a North Dakotan.

I want to keep my remarks brief. I don't need to go into depth about the numerous health benefits of immunizations, or even the health dangers of not being vaccinated, as many of my colleagues have spoken about these already, at length. I believe in legitimate exemptions to vaccines, for the reasons of health and strongly held personal beliefs. My concern is, however, focused chiefly on parents who may be objecting to vaccination on the basis of convenience. As a parent who is well-educated on immunizations (both the diseases they prevent, and their components, since my background is in chemistry, as well), I choose to vaccinate myself and my own family, and would like to share my knowledge with you, today.

I would like to address one of the more practical concerns that is posed by vaccine exemption. In Minnesota, during the spring of 2017, a decline in vaccination coverage facilitated the spread of measles in a community of children, throughout the Twin Cities. Through the incredible work of the health department, this outbreak was contained to only 75 children. Thanks to the North Dakota's incredible health departments, clinics, and local health units, this outbreak did not spread to our neighboring state – although it easily could have.

Of those 75 cases, nearly half were hospitalized and suffered needlessly. Measles is an incredibly infectious disease – 5 to 10 times more infectious than COVID-19. Each of these cases led to a contact tracing investigation, and in the event that a contact had no immunity to measles through vaccination, each subsequent exposure to the incident case resulted in a quarantine of that contact of up to three weeks. These were mainly children exposed, which means parents staying home for that entire duration. Many of you are likely parents or caregivers, of children – do you have a 3-4 weeks of family leave banked? I certainly do not.

While parents have the right to refuse vaccination, they also deserve to know the consequences of non-vaccination, and how it will affect their lives. Many of the families involved in this Minnesota outbreak lost their pay, or their jobs, due to this unexpected outcome. The measles outbreak cost the state of Minnesota over \$2 million in public health cost, and that does not even account for direct medical costs, or the lost days of work. Quarantine is necessary to keep people healthy and safe, and to prevent larger outbreaks of disease. This protects people who are unvaccinated, whatever the reason.

Non-vaccination has large, fiscal consequences. Parents deserve the right to know this, in addition to the risk they pose to their families, by refusing immunization.

Thank you for your time and I would be happy to answer any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'DPinnick', with a stylized, cursive script.

Danielle Pinnick, MPH

[Minnesota measles outbreak to cost state \\$1 million | CIDRAP \(umn.edu\)](#)

[WHO\\_SurveillanceVaccinePreventable\\_11\\_Measles\\_R1.pdf](#)