

Good afternoon, Chairman Weisz, and members of the House Human Services Committee. I am Sandy Tibke, the Director of Foundation for a Healthy North Dakota.

I am providing testimony in opposition to HB1200.

A 2017 measles outbreak in Minnesota cost Hennepin County and the state department of health \$1.3 million to contain, not including costs incurred by private insurance or individual families (Pike et al., 2021). For any vaccine-preventable disease outbreak, the quarantine period can be long and burdensome to working families and employers. In the case of a measles outbreak, unvaccinated students would be subject to an exclusion period of at least 21 days from the last measles case in the school. An outbreak of a preventable disease can have a far-ranging and lasting impact on businesses, schools, families, and communities.

This proposed legislation attempts to solve a problem that does not exist in North Dakota and will open the door to preventable disease.

- HB1200 (2023) is initially focused on COVID-19, but the current language would prohibit all vaccine requirements for school and university entry, including immunization against polio, measles, and pertussis.
- According to House Bill 1200 (2023) relating to COVID-19 vaccinations and experimental vaccines, the definition of “experimental vaccine” included in part d, “The vaccine’s manufacturer has liability, including for design defect claims, for any death or injury caused by the vaccine” would eliminate all vaccines in the state of North Dakota because of the National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program (NVICP) bill signed by President Reagan in 1986.
- The purpose of the National Childhood Vaccine Injury Act (NCVIA), which created the NVICP, was to eliminate the potential financial liability of vaccine manufacturers due to vaccine injury claims, to ensure a stable supply of vaccines, to stabilize vaccine costs, and to provide cost-effective arbitration for vaccine injury claims.
- SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) vaccine is NOT on the school vaccination requirements list in North Dakota (NDCC 23-07-17). The only way this vaccine can be required is with legislative approval.

Parental choice and freedom to not vaccinate are preserved under current laws with a wide variety of exemptions. The state already allows for three types of immunization exemptions:

- Medical
- Religious
- Moral/Philosophical (personal belief)

Outcomes of eliminating vaccine requirements for school and university entry:

- When infected with a vaccine-preventable disease, individuals and families lose time from work and school and spend resources on medical care and treatment.
- Some students attending school have medical conditions that put them at high risk for complications due to illness. Some teachers, including pregnant teachers, are also at high risk for illnesses like rubella which would put themselves or the unborn baby at risk for severe disease if exposed. High immunization rates help to protect those that cannot be vaccinated by preventing the transmission of preventable diseases.
- Helping parents ensure that their children are up to date with vaccination keeps them healthy and in school and keeps parents at their jobs. Keeping measles, mumps, polio, and other diseases at bay helps schools use their resources in the classroom.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I would be happy to respond to any questions you may have.

References

Pike, J., Melnick, A., Gastañaduy, P. A., Kay, M., Harbison, J., Leidner, A. J., Rice, S., Asato, K., Schwartz, L., & DeBolt, C. (2021, April 1). Societal costs of a measles outbreak. American Academy of Pediatrics.

<https://publications.aap.org/pediatrics/article/147/4/e2020027037/180774/Societal-Costs-of-a-Measles-Outbreak?autologincheck=redirected>