

Testimony
House Bill 1457
House Human Service Committee,
Tuesday February 4, 2025
Rolette County Public Health District

Good morning, Chairperson Ruby, and members of the Human Services Committee.

My name is Barbara Frydenlund, I am a Registered Nurse and the administrator of Rolette County Public Health. Rolette County Public Health District serves Rolette County located in District 9.

I am here in opposition to House Bill 1457, which by interpretation appears to be an effort to remove vaccine requirements for childcare, school, colleges, and employment just to name a few.

The development of safe and effective vaccines against diseases that cause substantial morbidity, and mortality has been one of the foremost scientific advances of the 21st century. It would be truly unfortunate to undo the advances of modern medicine that vaccines have afforded us.

Vaccination, along with sanitation and clean drinking water, are public health interventions that are undeniably responsible for improved health outcomes globally. The positive health impact of vaccination on the health of the world's population is hard to argue.

Vaccination not only protects the individual receiving the vaccine but also contributes to the broader concept of herd immunity. Herd immunity occurs when a sizable portion of the population is immune to a contagious disease, thereby providing indirect protection to those who cannot be vaccinated, such as infants, individuals with certain medical conditions, or those with compromised immune systems. For many diseases, achieving herd immunity requires a vaccination rate of around 90-95%.

Schools and childcare settings are particularly susceptible to disease outbreaks due to the close contact between children and staff. Mandating vaccines helps prevent such outbreaks by ensuring an elevated level of immunity within these environments. This minimizes the risk of transmission and protects vulnerable populations, including those who are too young or unable to receive certain vaccines.

Vaccination mandates yield substantial public health benefits, reducing the prevalence of vaccine-preventable diseases and associated complications. This includes lowering morbidity and mortality rates, decreasing healthcare costs, and preventing long-term disabilities caused by infectious diseases.

The cost of vaccinating a child or adult is significantly lower than the cost of treating a vaccine-preventable disease. Hospitalizations, medical treatments, and long-term care can place a considerable financial burden on families and the healthcare system. By preventing these diseases through vaccination, we can save considerable resources and allocate them to other essential healthcare services.

As a nurse, it is my professional, moral, and ethical responsibility to do whatever I can to protect the patients and families that I care for. Many patients are immune compromised, medically fragile, or too young to receive vaccines. Patients deserve high quality care without the fear of contracting a vaccine preventable disease from their care providers.

As a public health administrator, it is my professional, morale and ethical responsibility to protect our patients, and my staff from vaccine preventable diseases. I never want to be held liable for a member of my staff being responsible for a client contracting a vaccine preventable disease. More importantly my responsibility is to maintain a healthy and functional workforce. Vaccines save lives of children and adults.

We already have shortage of medical providers in North Dakota. It is critical that these individuals remain physically safe to function optimally to care for themselves, their patients, and their communities.

As a mother in the 1990's I could not wait to have my premature twin boys vaccinated and to give them the best chance at a healthy life. In the late 1980's I had watched so many children enduring spinal taps, invasive medical treatments, losing their hearing and at risk of dying from meningitis stemming from ear infections, respiratory infection, and sepsis caused by Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib) bacteria. HIB vaccine was a game changer. Vaccines through the years have been game changers.

While individual autonomy and personal beliefs are important, they must be balanced against the collective right to a healthy and safe community. Vaccine mandates are a reasonable and necessary measure to safeguard public health, especially in settings where the risk of disease transmission is high. Without required vaccines, we are only a car or plane ride away from catastrophic disease.

The rationale for vaccine mandates in schools and childcare settings is multifaceted, encompassing scientific evidence, public health benefits, ethical considerations, and legal precedents. These mandates play a crucial role in protecting the health and safety of all children and staff, preventing disease outbreaks, and ensuring equitable access to vaccines. As we continue to navigate public health challenges, vaccine mandates remain an essential tool in promoting a healthy and resilient society.

I realize that the historic public health success story of vaccines may be accepted by some members of various committee members and not by others. For this reason, I am going to tell you a personal story.

When I was 9 years old, I was at a cemetery with my parents and newborn brother. Proudly pushing my newborn brother in a stroller, I wandered off to an area of the cemetery that caught my eye. Little white graves, often with white lambs on top of the headstones. Being old enough to read, add and subtract, I noted that families had lost so many babies, toddlers, young children, and young parents. This realization caused great anguish for me as I doted on this new baby brother. My parents eventually came over to my historic find and found me crying. I finally spit out that I was scared that my baby brother would die like so many babies had in the 1800's and up to mid-1900's. I so well remember my mom and dad explaining that these young children, men and women had died from diseases that are now known as vaccine preventable diseases. They assured me that I was fully vaccinated and that my baby brother would be too. My dad

commented that history does repeat it is self and if people do not appreciate the science of disease prevention families will once again experience terrible loss. Even at this point in my young life I was a natural nurse and looked at my dad and said that I did not want to be part of letting history repeat itself.....and I suspect that you do not either.

Everything we do in life involves risk. Harm reduction processes set force by communities, governments and individuals are by design to save lives. Vaccine requirements, mandates are nothing more than harm reduction measures. Just as we should not HAVE to tell people to wear a seat belt, a bike helmet, to drive the speed limit but each year people do not follow best practice, become injured, cause great anguish and fiscal insult to their families and society. It is time to let go of governmental misguidance and or mistakes from 2020. Let us follow best practice, and the science behind medicine to strive to make North Dakota the Healthiest State in the Nation.

Thank you for allowing me to testify and I will stand for questions.

Sincerely,
Barbara Frydenlund, RN
Rolette County Public Health District
Administrator