



Written Testimony in Opposition to HB20-1239: Consumer Protections Concerning Vaccinations
Before the House Health & Insurance Committee: February 26, 2020

Dear House Health & Insurance Committee Members:

As the Executive Director of Tri-County Health Department (TCHD), I write in opposition to HB20-1239, Consumer Protection Regarding Vaccinations, which, if adopted, would have detrimental impacts to the health, safety and well-being of Colorado's children and communities. TCHD urges you to vote no on this measure. In writing to oppose this bill, I am conveying the opinion only of TCHD and not that of the Commissioners of Adams, Arapahoe, and Douglas Counties whose residents we serve.

The bill is redundant of existing federal vaccine consumer protection measures - including patient education, parental consent, adverse event reporting and medical evaluation of vaccine contraindications – and lacks recognition of well-established federal requirements for health care providers who administer vaccine.

Even more concerning for us as a public health agency is the provision that attempt to significantly limit the ability of public health agencies and the education system to protect and promote the common good in regards to public health and public safety. Specifically, the bill would prohibit schools from dismissing or refusing to admit a student who is unvaccinated. The bill creates civil liability of \$1,000-\$5,000 for any healthcare provider, healthcare facility, insurer, or school that violates these provisions.

This provision of the bill takes out of context critical public health disease control measures we use to prevent and contain outbreaks and the spread of disease under specific circumstances – whether in a school or child care setting, workplace, or other public setting. Exclusion, quarantine, and isolation have been longstanding tools of disease control for every state and local public health agency in the nation, and are critical to keep people safe and to manage ill persons capable of widely spreading a disease. For example, is it not important to require isolation of the recent family with measles who exposed several hundred persons in Children's Hospital Emergency Department in December 2019? What if those exposures occurred in a school or child care center? Let's take another example: if scientists are effective in developing a vaccine for the novel coronavirus that is spreading around the globe, provisions in this bill would not allow public health agencies to work with a school to refuse entry to a student who chose not to receive it. The impact of this bill would be to supersede well-established and nationally recommended disease control measures used in Colorado.

Vaccines, according to the World Health Organization and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control, are considered one of the most important public health interventions of the twentieth century, saving millions of lives and reducing the spread of contagious diseases. Ignoring this science is dangerous, and if passed, HB 1239 could lead to harmful consequences in schools and communities across Colorado.

We strongly encourage you to oppose this bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John M. Douglas, Jr., M.D." The signature is written in a cursive style.

John M. Douglas, Jr., M.D.
Executive Director

December 2019 Measles Cases in Colorado

By the numbers:

\$300,000+

—The provisional cost to Colorado's hospital and public health system from one unvaccinated family who visited the Children's Hospital Colorado emergency room in December 2019.

1: contagious family, three siblings

3,600: staff hours to identify and notify individuals with possible exposure

258: people with possible exposure contacted to offer intervention

10: number of agencies/organizations involved in the public health response:

- 5 County Health Departments, led by Tri-County Health Department
- Children's Hospital Colorado
- Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment
- U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- Airlines and Denver International Airport personnel

49: states with higher kindergarten measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccination rates than Colorado

94: adults and children who were either quarantined for 21 days or monitored weekly to see if symptoms developed after possible exposure

All this time and expense was entirely preventable with an MMR vaccine that costs \$70.

Senate Bill 163 is a common-sense approach that balances a parent's right to opt out of their child's vaccinations with vital updates that will modernize immunization policy and keep kids safe in schools and childcare centers

Vote YES on Senate Bill 163

Compiled by Children's Hospital Colorado and Tri-County Health Department

For more information:

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