

Hello, Chair and members of the committee,

My name is Kim Zawacki, and I represent myself. I am for HB20-1297.

As someone with a master's degree in school social work, I believe this is a needed bill. In my profession, I have often been asked if different situations should be reported to the Colorado Department of Human Services. There are many mandated reporters and concerned citizens that are wanting to help but also don't want to report claims that would not be appropriate or a good use of professionals time. My advice has always been if you have any concerns, it is best to report it. With that said, no one has ever asked me whether a child missing a vaccine should be reported. With all the talk about vaccines, I think it would help for this to be honed in on and clarified. Unfortunately, in my career I have needed to report many instances of possible abuse or neglect. In most of the cases I have needed to report, I was very concerned about the safety of that child. The professionals that investigate often seem hurried and overburdened. I have often heard of a need for foster parents but I have never heard of an abundance of them. The placements for these children that require safety and security are often asking for assistance. In an already very difficult situation, these children are often being shuffled around by professionals that are trying to find the time to do all they can for these children and their potential caregivers. I do not feel a parent that has decided to not vaccinate with one or more vaccinations would fit into the category of abusive or neglectful. We need to clarify this by including the information in this bill and making it law. I do not want to see our already overworked child protection professionals have to look into cases that are solely based on in most cases a very educated parent deciding not to have their child receive even one vaccination. Please support this bill and help keep our current system protecting the truly abused and neglected children of Colorado. Please vote yes on SB20-1297.