

School Nurse Organization of Idaho

snoi.org@gmail.com

<https://snoi.nursingnetwork.com/>

February 13, 2017

Dear Honorable Senate Members of the Health and Welfare Committee,

We are writing to voice our concerns regarding the change to Idaho's immunization law proposed in Senate Bill 1050. As school nurses, we value the current document because it enables us to have meaningful conversations with parents to ensure they understand the risks associated with opting to not vaccinate their children. Changing the requirement of a state form for vaccine exemption at school entry gives way for potentially long lasting public health ramifications because it would allow parents who aren't truly choosing to be exempt from requirements to write a statement saying they do not want to vaccinate their child just because it is more convenient.

The current standardized document is easily accessible to parents and school personnel. It explains the nature of the vaccine preventable diseases and possible outcomes should the disease be acquired. It allows the parent to simply state their reason for exemption and acknowledge that they have read the form. Idaho is surrounded by states whose exemption process is more tedious requiring a healthcare provider to sign off on their exemption request. Our current process is already too easy by most standards, and the proposed changes have the potential to be detrimental to the overall public health of our communities. The current document allows school nurses or in many cases the school secretary to properly document and track students who are at risk. This is important in the instance of an outbreak of a vaccine preventable disease so the school personnel can easily identify and remove students, per law, to protect those students as well as the public and to decrease the outbreak. Making the exemption process easier by having the only condition being a "signed statement" allows opportunity for parents to avoid the required immunizations out of convenience.

Our parent organization, The National Association of School Nurses recently published Framework for 21st Century School Nursing Practice. This model is a collaborative approach focusing on not only the student, but "whole school, whole community, whole child". This framework encompasses the daily work we do in caring for not only our students, but also the communities in which we work and live. We are promoters and protectors of public health. Senate Bill 1050 has the potential to weaken our immunization standards and procedures and could affect not only student outcomes, but our entire community. Those who are unable to be immunized, immune compromised, and those who are too young to be fully vaccinated are going to be at greatest risk. We stand against Senate Bill 1050.

Sincerely,

See Attached List



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