

Testimony in Support of Bill HB1288 March 13,2014

Madame Chair and respected members of the committee, my name is Dr. Erwin Gelfand. I have been the chairman of Pediatrics at National Jewish Health and vice-chairman of the Department of Pediatrics at the University of Colorado for the last 27 years.

I am here today wearing a number of hats, as a parent, a grandparent and most relevant today as an immunologist who for the past 45+ years has been involved in the care of children and adults who have a compromised immune system. What does this mean as it takes many forms. But all of them lead to a unique susceptibility to viral infections in the community, infections that are for the most part prevented by vaccination. The math is simple- the number of infected individuals capable of transmitting the infection to someone with a compromised immune system is directly related to the number of unvaccinated individuals.

I am all for choice, but with parental choice comes social responsibility...and when I say social, I mean responsibility for others around them, especially for the large number of children who cannot adequately fight an infection transmitted by an unvaccinated child.

There are many here today who are more practiced and articulate I am sure than I am and who can quote vaccination statistics and failures both in and out of context. Yes, I hear that parents are educated about

vaccination, and know the risks and benefits and even failures as it pertains to their own child...As do I! But, I am here today speaking on behalf of those who don't have a voice, those who are not in the package inserts or the statistics or the media...they are the hundreds and even thousands of children and adults who cannot adequately defend themselves when infected by a common virus.

Yes, I take care of bubble babies who are born without an immune system...but fortunately they are rare. What is not rare are the patients who have more common forms of immunodeficiency, patients who have had life-saving chemotherapy or even allergic patients on corticosteroids...all of them threatened every day with a susceptibility that can end their life.

Where is the social, and I underscore social responsibility, to help the parents of one of these children, so that for example, parents of these susceptible kids don't have to live in constant fear when their children are dropped off at school.

When I see an asthmatic child who was treated with steroids, on a ventilator fighting for her life because of a pertussis infection, I ask where does choice begin, where does it end. Several weeks ago I lost a patient, an 8 year old boy treated with high doses of corticosteroids for severe allergic disease, who developed rampant chicken pox throughout his body...who shares responsibility..are unvaccinated children responsible,\? are their parents?

I cannot urge you more to support bill HB1288 on behalf of the children you don't hear about but who are dependent on you to make a life-saving decision.