



Colorado Children's Immunization Coalition

Oppose SB15-077 – Parent's Bill of Rights

SB 15-77 WILL FURTHER ERODE COLORADO'S LOW IMMUNIZATION RATES PUTTING CHILDREN AT RISK FOR HARMFUL, POTENTIALLY DEADLY, INFECTIOUS DISEASE

Colorado immunization rates are low and put the entire state at risk for epidemics. Current data shows Colorado ranks 45th among U.S. states for vaccination rate with over 27 percent under-immunized at 36 months of age.

SB 15-77 requires schools to inform parents of their ability to opt out of vaccines.

- Such a requirement moves the state away from the current "*presume to immunize*" policy and could have the adverse impact of encouraging parents to opt-out of vaccinating their children.
- The requirement creates an additional burden for school administrators and an unnecessary requirement to existing policies that already allow parents to exempt their children from vaccines.
- All 50 states require immunizations for school entry. All 50 states allow exemptions for medical reasons and 48 states allow religious exemptions.
- Colorado is one of only 19 states that allow parents to exempt based on personal or philosophical beliefs.
- Currently, parents need only provide their signature to exempt their child from a vaccine. For this reason, some parents exempt out of convenience, rather than a strongly held personal belief.
- Colorado has recently enacted important immunization legislation to strengthen our fragile immunization system. HB 14-1288 Concerning Personal Belief Exemptions for Childhood Vaccines and SB 13-222, establishing the Vaccine Access Taskforce are two new laws that are still being implemented. SB 15-77 would erode hard fought victories in enacting these new immunization laws.
- When we immunize our children against infectious diseases, we give them the opportunity to learn and grow in a healthy environment.

IMMUNIZATIONS ARE ESSENTIAL TO KEEPING CHILDREN HEALTHY

- Vaccines are considered one of the greatest public health achievements of the 20th century.
- Vaccines save an estimated 3 million children's lives every year.
- Thanks to vaccines, we rarely see diseases like polio in the United States.

CURRENT TRENDS IN COLORADO'S IMMUNIZATION SYSTEM PUT THE ENTIRE STATE AT RISK

- Due to a growing number of parents who refuse to vaccinate their children based on myths and false information, the U.S. is now experiencing a dangerous measles outbreak, with more than 100 cases in 14 states, including a case in Colorado.
- Measles Mumps Rubella (MMR) vaccine coverage among 2 year-old children was only 86 percent in Colorado, well below the 92-95 percent levels required to achieve herd immunity.

For more information:

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- In 2013, there were \$29.2 million in charges for treating children in Colorado for vaccine-preventable diseases, compared to \$26.6 million in 2012.
- In 2013, 538 Colorado children were hospitalized with vaccine-preventable diseases including influenza, compared to 414 in 2012.
- In 2013, 70.1 percent of children hospitalized with vaccine-preventable disease in Colorado were four years of age or younger.
- In 2013, pertussis (whooping cough) cases in Colorado remained at epidemic levels for the second year with 1,432 reported cases, 81 percent of which were in children ages 0-19.

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