

To: Members of the Illinois Senate
From: Illinois Family Institute
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OPPOSE SB 1776

SB 1776 would disallow a parent's right under the First Amendment to exercise personal religious beliefs to not vaccinate if those beliefs are not stated in the tenets and practices of a "recognized church or religious organization" of which the parents are members.

The state's current religious exemption may take two forms:

- If the vaccine mandate conflicts with the tenets and practices of a recognized church or religious organization of which the parents is an adherent or member; or
- If the parent or legal guardian objects to the vaccine mandate based on personal religious beliefs.

Under the current law, recent **CDC statistics show that Illinois kindergartners are at the rates infectious disease specialists desire for "community" or "herd immunity"**- 95 percent vaccinated:

- 95.5 percent are vaccinated for MMR – measles, mumps, rubella
- 94.6 percent are vaccinated for DPT – diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus
- 96.2 percent are vaccinated for Varicella (Chicken pox)

Currently, Illinois requires up to 30 doses of 12 different vaccines for school age children, including 4 doses of Diphtheria, 4 doses of Pertussis, 4 doses of Tetanus, 3 or more doses of Polio, 2 doses of Measles, 2 doses of Rubella, 2 doses of Mumps, 1 dose of Haemophilus influenzae type b (pre-K), 3 doses of Hepatitis B, 2 doses of Varicella vaccine, 1 dose of pneumococcal, up to 2 doses of Meningococcal Disease.

Vaccine ingredients include viruses and chemicals that may cause adverse reactions, such as mercury, thimerosal, and formaldehyde, among others.

Adverse reactions are a reality. The federal government set up a Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting system to acquire data of adverse reactions. The federal government also has a fund that compensates when an adverse reaction to mandated vaccines occur.

Vaccine manufacturers are protected from liability if a child suffers an adverse event if the immunization is state-mandated.

Parents that are responsible for the protection of their children's health should be allowed to exercise the right to delay or refuse state-mandated vaccines if they believe to do so would violate their religious convictions – whether or not their church doctrine or officials hold the same stance.

Parents are filing religious exemption letters because vaccine manufacturers are failing to alleviate fears and concerns about vaccinations. It has become a public trust issue that the companies must work to alleviate rather than use state law to wield pressure over concerned parents.

Seventeen other states offer a third exemption option: a philosophical or conscientious objection – which does not require religion-associated rationale.

It is reasonable and rational for the state to allow the medical and religious exemptions to mandatory vaccines as Illinois law currently stands. ♦

