

Support SB1410 to Improve Immunization Rates in Illinois

SB1410, as passed by the Illinois Senate, creates a *Certificate of Religious Exemption* for parents/guardians that want to exempt their child from school required vaccines on religious grounds.

SB1410 would NOT remove religious exemptions for parents or legal guardians who object to school required health examinations, screenings or immunizations (or any part thereof) on religious grounds. **It does NOT change what constitutes a religious belief.**

The Certificate would simply detail the grounds for objection by the parent or guardian and the specific immunizations and/or examinations to which they object, as currently required by state statute. The signed certificate would also reflect the parent or legal guardian understands their school's exclusion policies in the case of a vaccine preventable disease outbreak or exposure.

The Certificate must also be signed by the authorized examining health care provider *responsible for the performance of the child's health examination*, confirming that they have provided education to the parent on the benefits of immunization and the health risks to the student and community of the communicable diseases for which immunization is required. **The health care provider's signature on the Certificate reflects only that education was given and does not allow a health care provider to determine a religious exemption.**

Certificates would be required on the same schedule as school physicals (Kindergarten, 6th and 9th grades) and therefore, would not require any extra visits with a health care provider or added costs.

SB1410 does not change the ability of children to receive a medical exemption for immunization. Providers are required to provide Vaccine Information Sheets created by the CDC and may write a letter to exempt a child from immunizations for medical reasons if the provider feels the child may be more susceptible to experience an adverse reaction.

FACTS:

- All states and the District of Columbia (DC) have immunization requirements for children enrolling in childcare facilities and schools. Illinois, 43 other states and DC allow for exemptions to these requirements due to religious beliefs.
- The number of religious exemptions in Illinois has risen from over 5,600 in 2009/2010 to over 13,000 in 2013/2014. **The number of religious exemptions in Illinois has more than doubled in 5 years.**
- As of March 20, Illinois has had 15 confirmed cases of measles in 2015. This outbreak cost Cook County \$100,000 and the State of Illinois \$50,000.
- Measles is the greatest vaccine-preventable killer of children in the world today. As recent as 1989-1991, there was a resurgence of measles in the United States that caused 123 deaths and 11,000 hospitalizations.
- Studies have shown states with easily obtained non-medical exemptions have higher rates of pertussis and measles and states with simpler immunization exemption procedures have non-medical exemption rates that are more than twice as high as those states with more complex procedures.

This bill preserves a parent's option to exempt their child from immunizations, but also ensures that such a decision is an informed one and that the parent is aware of the individual and public health risks of choosing not to immunize their child.

Supporting organizations:

Illinois Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics
Illinois State Medical Society
EverThrive Illinois
Northern Illinois Public Health Consortium
Illinois Association of School Nurses
Illinois Pharmacist Association

Chicago Department of Public Health
Cook County Department of Public Health
Illinois Academy of Family Physician
Illinois Public Health Association
March of Dimes, Illinois Chapter
Illinois Osteopathic Medical Society