

May 13, 2015

House Health and Aging SB121- Proponent Testimony

Chairwoman Gonzales, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the Health and Aging committee... thank you for your time and this opportunity to share Columbus Public Health's insight on immunizations and support for SB121. This bill will require students to be immunized against meningococcal disease and the Ohio Department of Health to specify ages at which immunization is recommended.

My name is Kelli Arthur Hykes, Director of Public Health Policy; I am honored to be here representing Dr. Teresa Long and Columbus Public Health and I am also here as a member of the Public Affairs committee of The Association of Ohio Health Commissioners representing AOHC.

At Columbus Public Health, our number one priority is the health and safety of the community, especially our youngest – and most vulnerable -- residents. One of the best ways we can protect their health and improve their lives is through childhood immunizations. The CDC currently recommends vaccination against meningitis at ages 11-12, with a booster at 16. This vaccination schedule prepares students for the high-risk environments of high school and college.

Questions arose during sponsor testimony as to how long these recommendations have been in place. In 2000, The [Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices \(ACIP\)](#) provided advice and guidance, that was adopted, to the Director of the CDC for all 1st year college students to be vaccinated against meningitis. In 2005 the recommendation was updated to address the preference for a quadrivalent formula of the vaccine. Since that 2005 recommendation, a panel of experts has continued to review published and



unpublished data to make the latest recommendation, adopted March 2013. This schedule calls for a meningococcal immunization at age 11-12 and a booster at age 16. The schedule was set based on extensive research and analysis that provides guidance on how to reduce not only the total number of cases of meningitis we experience in this country, but also the most severe complications of the disease.

Bacterial meningitis, which this bill would help us protect against, is, unfortunately, not uncommon, and is a serious illness caused by meningococcal disease. However, as we have said, it may be prevented through immunization. According to the CDC, 1,000 to 2,600 people contract meningococcal disease each year in the United States. One in 10 of these cases results in death. Bacterial meningitis infections may also cause serious health problems in 11 to 19 percent of survivors such as loss of limbs, deafness, nervous system problems, mental retardation, seizures and strokes. You may have read an article in The Columbus Dispatch a few weeks ago about a Columbus barber who survived but lost his hands and feet to meningitis.

As we are sadly aware, Ohio ranks last in the nation, tied with West Virginia, for the worst immunization rates in the country. While CPH would be in strong support of comprehensive legislation adopting the CDC Immunization Schedule as the standard across the board for all vaccination requirements in our state, legislation like this, that gets us closer to compelling healthy individuals to follow the CDC Immunization Schedule, will undoubtedly help us move the marker. It is unfortunate that we are asking you to respond to an outbreak, or a personal tragedy, but CPH is strongly in favor of SB121 and grateful to Senator Hite for bringing it forward.

Thank you for your time and your interest in public health. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

(If you have additional questions later, please feel free to contact Kelli Arthur Hykes, Director of Public Health Policy at 614-645-2097 or KAHYKES@columbus.gov and she will respond promptly on behalf of Columbus Public Health.)

Thank you!