

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 121

Dustin McKee, Voices for Ohio's Children

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Chairwoman Gonzales, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the House Health and Aging Committee, thank you for this opportunity to testify before you today in support of Senate Bill 121. My name is Dustin McKee, and I am the Policy and Advocacy Associate for Voices for Ohio's Children.

Voices for Ohio's Children advocates for policies that maximize a child's life chances by ensuring children are safe, healthy, educated, connected, and employable. Voices helps ensure that the needs of Ohio's 3 million children are prioritized at the local, state and federal levels. In order to accomplish this goal, our organization advocates for sound public policies that help ensure children are poised for success.

Voices has been a strong supporter of legislative efforts to increase the rate at which children are vaccinated against various preventative diseases. It is widely known that meningitis is a preventable disease that, if contracted, can have serious consequences for children and adults. According to the Centers for Disease Control, approximately 10 to 15% of people with meningococcal disease die even after they receive the appropriate antibiotic treatment. Of those who recover, up to 20% end up suffering from aftereffects such as permanent hearing loss, limb loss, or brain damage. In many cases, these terrible outcomes can be prevented if children and adults receive the proper vaccinations.

Senate Bill 121 would require the Department of Health to specify ages at which immunization against meningococcal disease is recommended. The bill would also require students in those specified age groups recommended by the Ohio Department of Health to be immunized against meningococcal disease starting in the 2016-17 school year. The Centers for Disease Control currently recommend vaccination against meningitis at ages 11-12, and a booster against meningitis at 16. This vaccination schedule prepares students for the high-risk environments of high school and college.



Voices for Ohio's Children commends Senator Hite for pursuing this legislation, and urges members of this committee, as well as all members of the 131st General Assembly, to pass SB 121 without delay. Doing so will help to save the lives and health of many of Ohio's youth.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify before you today regarding Senate Bill 121. I would be happy to answer any questions from the committee at this time.

safe
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