

Testimony of Megan Elder, M.S. Ed.
House Bill 49 - State Operating Budget
Opposition to Proposed AAP Immunization Amendment
Senate Finance and Medicaid Subcommittee
May 24, 2017

Good morning Chairman Hackett, Vice Chair Tavares and honorable members of the Senate Finance and Medicaid Subcommittee. I appreciate the opportunity to share some time with you today. My name is Megan Elder, and I hold a Masters in Education as an Intervention Specialist, with the bulk of my teaching experience taking place in the Autism Classroom.

Born and raised in Ohio, I come from a proud family of educators, my father a retired County Board of DD Superintendent and my mother a retired Special Education teacher. I have been employed in various capacities in my career, from tutor and in home care provider, to adult services provider, substitute teacher, and my favorite role, classroom teacher. The health and well being of Ohio's children, including my two sons and baby girl arriving in August, is not a topic I take lightly.

I would first like to address previous testimonies from AAP representative doctors, that suggest this is a minor, or benign change. Vaccines are a product. The manufacturers of vaccines are not liable for any damage caused by their product.

The suggestion that this amendment preserves parental choice is a misleading oversimplification of what is happening.

Instead, this would place a burdensome requirement on parents who decide to select, delay, or decline any required vaccinations. Having to receive counseling and a signature from a doctor, who does, in fact, stand to profit from the sale of this product to consumers, is not an insignificant change. In America, and Ohio, there is constitutional protections for religious beliefs. Specifically, the Ohio Constitution states, "All men have a natural and indefeasible right to worship Almighty God according to the dictates of their own conscience. No person shall be compelled to attend, erect, or support any place of worship, or maintain any form of worship, against his consent; and no preference shall be given, by law, to any religious society; nor shall any interference with the rights of conscience be permitted." I would definitely qualify these proposed requirements as an interference with religious and conscience beliefs.

I also find it quite interesting that nobody seems to be concerned about the vaccination status of all the adults in the school and childcare environment. If vaccines truly did what they are claimed to do, wouldn't every teacher, administrator, volunteer, bus driver, custodian, coach, substitute, and parent need to be up to date on the childhood schedule to achieve this coveted concept of herd immunity? Should parents also have access to adult vaccination rates in their schools? At what point does this end? Do we also need to report how many students live in homes with gun owners? There is a possibility a child may bring their parent's gun to school, should parents also have access to that information about each individual school?

On the topic of public school, I would also like to add that in my lifetime of growing and working in the special education setting, I have taken note, as I am sure many in this room have, that our children are getting sicker and sicker. Rates of chronic diseases, disabilities, and mental illness in our youth is skyrocketing. I recently was a substitute in a middle class

elementary school in a suburb of Cleveland. The emergency alert list was left for me, detailing the students with either an anaphylactic allergy requiring an EpiPen, seizure disorder, or insulin dependent Diabetes. Seizures, severe allergies and diabetes are all documented vaccine reactions. Of about 700 students in this school, there were over 50 on the medical alert list. That is simply unacceptable, and until we find the causes of the tragedy that's happening to our youth, we should carefully examine any attempts at forced biological products that come with risks, simply to attend school.

My children have an uncle who is medically diagnosed with vaccine induced intractable epilepsy. **Tommy requires 24 hour care, has been on life support almost 30 times from seizure complications, and again this is a documented vaccine injury, diagnosed by a neurologist.** He has had to submit both a medical and religious exemptions for public school, required to cover all the vaccines he stopped receiving after the initial injury. Despite this family history, my children were denied medical exemptions. Eventually, we were told the practice would be reevaluating their policy on seeing unvaccinated children, and were asked to sign a form that, among other things, stated we were endangering our child's life, and other children, by making what I consider an educated, thoughtful decision based on weighing the risks and benefits of each individual vaccination. This doctor didn't have the opportunity to research whether or not our specific genetic and medical history would predispose my children to an injury. He simply blew it off, and said it's "unlikely" my children would be affected. I had done my research, as resources are available for parents to explore the topic, and for me it began by reading a text by a well known pediatrician, Dr. Bob Sears, called, "The Vaccine Book."

I would like to close by reminding you of the AAP's financial affiliation with several vaccine manufacturers. If this is about public health, it does not belong in the budget bill. This amendment's inclusion in SB49 would be a clear business transaction between the state of Ohio and the pharmaceutical industry. The AAP endorses the dismissal of non-vaccinating families under certain circumstances. This is a serious conflict of interest, and I know of many other families that have experienced the same pressures and dismissals for choosing not to vaccinate, and even threats of contacting Child Protective Services if a parent declines a product that has caused \$3.6 billion dollars worth of compensated damage, only representing a fraction of the harm. This is not a benign change to current policy. It is something that deserves an open forum for honest conversation and debate.

Thank you for your time.