

Testimony of Donna Jo Kazee

Finance – Health and Medicaid Subcommittee

Re: House Bill 49 - State Operating Budget

Opposition to Ohio Chapter AAP proposal to change immunization exemption and tracking processes

May 24, 2017

Thank you, Chair Hackett, Vice Chair Tavares, and distinguished members of the Finance – Health and Medicaid Subcommittee.

I grew up in the 1970s and '80s in rural Tennessee. I have a congenital neuromuscular disorder, and despite Federal laws against discrimination, willingness to allow disabled students in public schools was slow to catch on there. So every few years, when an administrator got a bee in his or her bonnet and under the guise of my “best interests” perhaps being placement at a special facility, I would be subjected to IQ testing to prove that I was worthy to be around my nondisabled peers. That was because my mother insisted that I should be included, and luckily for me, I always tested gifted, making the case for my segregation untenable.

My school years would also see struggles for kids with various diseases to exercise their right to public education, including most notably Ryan White, who had AIDS. Court cases would decide that children like Ryan, despite their diseases being communicable, had every right to attend public school without harassment or parents and students having knowledge of their disease status.¹ I cannot imagine how the ACLU and other organizations would respond if schools started publishing lists of how many of their kids had infectious diseases, cancer, learning or physical disabilities, or spoke English as a second language as a way to inform parents who might consider those factors counter to their child’s health or well-being.

Yet the Ohio Chapter of AAP is effectively encouraging you to discriminate against another minority in our state, children whose parents choose to use vaccination exemptions because they either don’t vaccinate, selectively vaccinate, and/or don’t want the state in their children’s medical business. Children who comprise about 2.3% of all Ohio kindergarten students, according to the CDC’s most recent report.² They actually state that data collection and reporting “would allow parents of children with cancer, autoimmune diseases, and weak immune systems to know the immunization rate at their child’s school as they themselves are unable to vaccinate their kids.”

I am the mother of two children with vaccine injuries and resulting medical exemptions to vaccination. My oldest also has secondary immunodeficiency due to losing 80% of his small intestine shortly after birth. To lump all immunocompromised kids into one bucket as not being able to be vaccinated and needing protection via others being vaccinated is, in the very least, not forthright.

¹ <http://www.pkids.org/files/11-01civilrights.pdf>

² <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/imz-managers/coverage/schoolvaxview/data-reports/exemptions-reports/2015-16.html>

Immunocompromised kids are regularly given many vaccines – sometimes even live-virus vaccines³ – and that was a condition of my son’s release from the NICU. In fact, vaccination (except with live-virus vaccines) is recommended and sometimes a condition for being placed on a transplant list.⁴⁵

It wasn’t the unvaccinated or partially vaccinated kids who placed my son at most risk during his public school years. It was kids who were fully vaccinated who came to school sick! Kids whose parents believed that, since they had their shots, they were safe. Kids who came to school symptomatic with fever, vomiting, diarrhea, and cough/nasal discharge. Kids with Coxsackie virus, colds, conjunctivitis, flu (even H1N1) despite being vaccinated, noninfluenza respiratory illness, strep throat, and others. The lesson to me was that all symptomatic kids should remain home to prevent the spread of illness – vaccinated or not!

This does not even take into account recently vaccinated kids who are known to shed viruses for several weeks, and with whom the Ohio Chapter of AAP does not seem to be concerned. In the CDC’s own data, 80% of children given Live Attenuated Influenza Vaccine shed for a mean duration of 7.6 days.⁶ Other viruses can shed for two weeks to one month, depending on the health status of the recipient.⁷ Are parents of immunocompromised children notified when kids have recently received live-virus vaccines?

Overwhelmingly, parents act in the best interest of their children, and this does not mean they all do the same things. Those who choose to use exemptions may do so for a variety of reasons, including a previous adverse event with vaccination, a familial history of such adverse events, or even a strong belief that injecting an ostensibly healthy child with various antigens, adjuvants, and other chemicals is wrong. Please continue to let those parents freely act according to their own convictions. Please do not place burdens on these parents to receive physician counseling or signatures. Please do not manufacture public outrage by publishing immunization data and linking it to overall health risk of a school population. Please do not consider this amendment proposed by the Ohio Chapter of the AAP.

³ https://oup.silverchair-cdn.com/oup/backfile/Content_public/Journal/cid/58/3/10.1093_cid_cit684/2/cit684.pdf?Expires=1495411775&Signature=btsx6PKGXCbxoTXQKauXJTyeoLC3hfGgYGy6wCZG3HQyiNjli0blb9gHWVAYVnNbAyjPeqboSipHN1EnTjoH03rXY7br3QLh2uZUGG8OKXzfjzbZ3q~GSXIGV4usNwiMveh1a71rNfrvOMpRL9kuNswOGOk0mP29MS6Kt8XVZsJ8j6x7pi2f0U2R89V3f7F~SuZEpp36vNQYlotqx8550HV3rFoDRLgD2t2s4r~SwBuqPre0qmcDQ9wgtBV3PpX6F0UJ2rf-JN3vIBQCw61kdy8J66xMPr4DQe7WlrOkYEbvZoF5CBE9Bf9WVVXxMtYiHKO2t1JsJp-3g0aaQ2KmCQ_&Key-Pair-Id=APKAIUCZBIA4LVPVW3Q

⁴ <http://www.cpmc.org/advanced/kidney/news/newsletter/042012-transplant-vaccinations.html>

⁵ <https://pidpic.stanford.edu/2015/05/influenza-vaccine-information-for-transplant-patients/>

⁶ https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr6207a1.htm?s_cid=rr6207a1_w#LiveAttenuatedInfluenzaVaccines

⁷ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3381670/>