



March 30, 2015

SENATE HEALTH COMMITTEE
STATE CAPITOL ROOM 2191
SACRAMENTO, CA 95814

SB 277: Elimination of CA Personal Belief Exemption for School-Entry Vaccines
AAP-CA Position: SUPPORT

Dear Chairman Hernandez,

The American Academy of Pediatrics, California strongly supports SB 277 (Pan & Allen). This bill would eliminate the personal belief exemption option from school immunization law and also require the governing board of a school district to notify parents or guardians of school immunization rates.

Protecting the individual and the community from communicable diseases such as measles, mumps, pertussis, is a core function of public health. It is both reasonable and appropriate for California to take steps to ensure that schools and childcares are safe for all who attend.

The near-elimination through vaccination of illness and death from once-prevalent childhood diseases, including measles, is one of the great individual and public health accomplishments of our time. Unfortunately, the inability for us to see the widespread suffering and deaths these diseases can cause has led to an increase in the number who opt out from getting their children vaccinated, citing concerns that while often deeply held are not supported by evidence. And when the unvaccinated reach a level of even 10% of the population, they can put everyone at risk.

High vaccine coverage, particularly at the community level, is extremely important for children who cannot be vaccinated, including infants who are too young to be vaccinated, children who have medical contraindications to vaccination, individuals who have weakened immune systems and the elderly.

If there is a single place that children must be kept as safe as humanly possible it is at school/child care. SB 277 builds on existing laws to create a “vaccine-preventable illness safe zone” in our schools and childcare settings.

Requiring vaccination is based on the same principle that causes schools to prohibit a child with an active fever from attending class. The decision whether that child remains in school is not the parent’s choice. By extension, it should not be an independent decision by each parent regarding non-vaccination and school attendance.

SB 277 does not require any new vaccines; it does not alter the ability of a parent to obtain a medical exemption from vaccine requirements. What it does do is prevent California District IX parents who do not vaccinate their children from leaving their child at school or day care. No parent should fear sending their child who has cancer to class, or be afraid

to bring their six-month old with them to attend a school's spring concert in which their 6-year old has a solo due to the possibility that their child or infant might contract a potentially serious or even fatal (yet preventable) disease.

Practicing pediatricians work in close partnership with parents daily, and have tremendous respect for the parent's right to make choices that affect their child's individual health and well-being. But vaccines are not about a single child—they are about the public health, and what we as a society agree is evidence-based to protect all of our children. To that end, California pediatricians strongly support SB 277 and urge its enactment now.

We thank you for your public service and your leadership. We urge your AYE vote on SB 277.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kris E. Calvin" followed by a horizontal flourish and a vertical line.

Kris Calvin
Chief Executive Officer
American Academy of Pediatrics, California