

April 15, 2019

Senator Richard Pan, Chair
Committee on Health
State Capitol, Room 2191
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: SB 276 (Pan): Immunizations: medical exemptions.
AAP-CA Position: CO-SPONSOR**

Dear Senator Pan:

The American Academy of Pediatrics, California (AAP-CA) representing the over 5000 board-certified pediatrician members of California AAP Chapters 1, 2, 3 and 4 statewide is proud to cosponsor SB 276 to address an important public health issue by ensuring that California is able to maintain adequate immunization rates to keep children and communities safe.

In certain pockets of California, medical exemption rates for immunizations are as high as 20%, which places our communities at risk for a resurgence of preventable diseases. Given the highly contagious nature of diseases such as measles, vaccination rates of at least 95% are necessary to preserve what is called “community immunity” and prevent future outbreaks.

When the threshold of immunity gets too low, we all become more vulnerable to diseases. SB 276 would create a partnership between state public health, schools and doctors to help keep children safe at school and to protect vulnerable community members, including babies too young to be immunized and people who are immunocompromised, from the risks associated with contracting these diseases. It also protects the community at large from outbreaks of vaccine-preventable disease.

In 2015, California enacted SB 277, which removed the personal belief exemption for children attending public school or daycare. Since the passage of SB 277, however, the rate of medical exemptions has more than tripled (from 0.2% in 2015-16 to 0.7% in 2017-18). Numerous public health officials, medical providers, lawmakers, and media articles have raised concerns that a small number of physicians are monetizing their exemption-granting authority and profiting from the sale of medical exemptions.

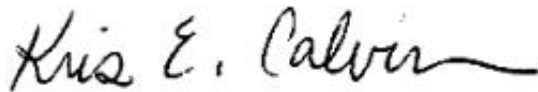
The CDC reports that in 2018, 21 people contracted measles in California. So far, several months into 2019, 17 confirmed measles cases, including 11 outbreak-associated cases, have been reported. Left unchecked, we will continue to see the number of cases and outbreaks rise. Just recently, the City of New York declared a measles outbreak a public health emergency, where there have been 285 confirmed cases; 21 of those cases led to hospitalizations, including five admissions to the intensive care unit. Only a very small percentage of the population, less than 1 percent, suffers from a qualifying medical condition - such as a severe allergic reaction to a vaccine component - that would lead to the granting of a medical exemption.

The American Academy of Pediatrics, California is proud to join the California Medical Association and the parents of Vaccinate California in support of SB 276 and urge you to vote AYE. Thank you for your public service and leadership on behalf of the health and well-being of the children, youth, and families of California.

Sincerely,



Eric Ball, MD
Governing Board
American Academy of Pediatrics, California



Kris Calvin
Chief Executive Officer
American Academy of Pediatrics, California

cc: AAP-CA Leadership; AAPCA Advocate Lydia Bourne