

June 13, 2019

Assembly Member Jim Wood, Chair
Assembly Committee on Health
State Capitol, Room 6005
Sacramento, California 95814

RE: SB 276 (Pan): Immunizations: medical exemptions as amended May 17, 2019.
AAP-CA Position: CO-SPONSOR

Dear Assembly Member Wood:

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 (Pan) to ensure that California is able to maintain adequate immunization rates to keep children and communities safe.

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. Yet in pockets of California, medical exemption rates for immunizations are as high as 50%, placing those communities at risk for a resurgence of preventable diseases; when the threshold of immunity gets too low, we all become more vulnerable to diseases. In all of 2018, per the Centers for Disease Control, 21 people contracted measles in California. So far, less than half way into 2019 there have already been a near-equal number of reported confirmed measles cases (17). If left unchecked, we will undoubtedly see the number of cases and outbreaks continue to rise.

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 would also protect the community at large from outbreaks of vaccine-preventable disease.

In 2015, California enacted SB 277, which removed the broad “personal belief” exemption for children attending public school or daycare. Although SB 277 improved vaccination rates overall, since its passage the rate of medical exemptions has more than quadrupled, from 0.2% to 0.9%. This increase has been concentrated in some areas of the state, putting the health of those children and those communities at risk. A primary factor generating this increased risk to health appears to have been a small number of physicians monetizing their exemption-granting authority and profiting from the sale of medical exemptions.

SB 276 will not change the relationship between the doctor and the patient/family; the parent will still retain the right to decide whether to vaccinate their children, and the doctor will still counsel them regarding vaccines, taking into account the child’s medical history, any contraindications and any temporary precautions.

What SB 276 will do is improve the process that keeps children safe at school by creating a partnership between state public health and the school districts.

SB 276 will tighten loopholes in the current process that are inappropriately permitting children to attend school unvaccinated with a “medical exemption” that does not meet evidence-based guidelines, and in many cases, one that has been issued for profit by the physician.

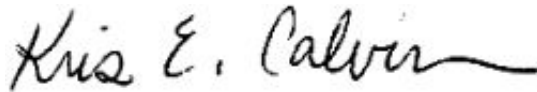
While we understand there is a lot of misinformation out there, we strongly urge you to act on the science and the evidence regarding vaccines. Please stand up for the best interest of children, communities, and the public health of all Californians by voting “AYE” on this important public health measure.

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; The Honorable Richard Pan, author