

HB0087 Public Health- Immunizations- Minor Consent (Access to Vaccines Act)

Meredith Lovell-Thayer

Oppose

Dear Members of the HGO Committee,

As a parent of four minor children I am writing you in concern of the language in HB0087. I don't understand why this bill has not been pulled already as other states have already pulled theirs due to the violation of medical and parental freedoms.

" Authorizing a health care provider to provide an immunization to a minor without the consent of certain individuals if the minor is at least 16 years of age and consents to the immunization and the health care provider determines the minor is mature and capable of giving informed consent with regard to the immunization; authorizing a health care provider to provide an immunization to a minor under certain provisions of the Act whether or not a parent is not reasonably available or objects to the provision of the immunization; etc."

Which "certain individuals" does this bill elude to? Guardians? Parents? It doesn't outline which legal aspects of care of a minor will be dismissed or not. This leaves this up to whom to determine which "certain individuals" will maintain medical decisions for minors or not? They go on to state a parent but it definitely leaves things open ended.

Why the age 16 as age of consent? You have to be 18 to vote in Maryland. You now have to be 21 to purchase tobacco products and alcohol. Why do we deem a 16 year old capable of making medical decisions but not able to vote? Not able to make a decision on tobacco or alcohol consumption? Just because sexual consent laws are set for 16 does not mean a child is capable of making medical decisions at that age. This shows that the bill is geared towards pushing HPV vaccination. It has already become a hard push in Maryland.

Which leads me into informed consent. Our laws currently limit things for minors based on age, for good reason. Their frontal lobes, impulse control, are not fully developed. What information is going to be given to ensure an informed decision is made? Maturity level is subjective is it not? HB0087 gives legally unaccountable individuals the power to persuade minor children to get vaccinated without the knowledge or consent of their parents. Doctors and medical workers should never be able to coerce impressionable minor children into giving "consent" to use of a pharmaceutical product or medical procedure that could cause injury or death without parental knowledge and consent. Should an adverse vaccine reaction occur, parents alone would be left to physically, emotionally and financially take care of a disabled or chronically ill child. The law does not outline that the provider is to have medical history, be the child's regular pediatrician, or even have a previous relationship with the child or family.

Many children do not know (or care to know) the extent of their medical history. Some children don't know their history due to being in foster care or adopted. Our Latvian bonus daughter couldn't tell you her medical history or when her last vaccinations took place. She will be 16 in October, speaks 4 languages, and is highly intelligent. As a mother I can tell you when my child last had a fever or a medication. When they last had a cold and were hospitalized and why.

Maryland has one of the highest rates of vaccine compliance. With many walk-in clinics and urgent care parents have access and ability to take children to be seen on their discretion. So, pushing the misinformation that this is to make things easier for working parents is false. Access isn't an issue nor is compliance within our state.

What this does do is it takes away parental rights to make medical decisions for their children. HB0087 goes against the Nation's long-standing principle that parents have a fundamental right to raise their children without undue adverse interference by the State as set forth in numerous U.S. Supreme Court

decisions. The Supreme Court found that, "deeply rooted in our Nation's history and tradition, is the belief that the parental role implies a substantial measure of authority over one's children. Indeed, "constitutional interpretation has consistently recognized that the parents' claim to authority in their own household to direct the rearing of their children is basic in the structure of our society."

HB0087 is a blatant attempt by the state to strip parents of their legal right to make informed decisions about vaccination for their minor children and hand that legal right to doctors and medical workers, who have no liability or accountability for what happens to the child after vaccination. HB0087 is a violation of parents' constitutional right to raise their children without undue interference from the state.

Thank you for your time,
Meredith Lovell-Thayer
Cumberland MD 21502