

My name is Steve Bress. I have been a Maryland resident for much more than 50 years, and I have a 17 year old son. This bill is aimed directly at us. I do not say just him, because this bill would take away rights from both of us.

Peer pressure and the quest for independence pretty much define a teenager's life. What does not define a teenager's life is making good choices. It is the job of a parent during these years to try and protect the teen from their own questionable decisions, while encouraging the independence that will allow them to function as adults. Life and death decisions about elective medical procedures should not be allowed without direct parental input.

A teenager, or younger child, should not be able to consent to a voluntary medical procedure any more complicated than a bandage on a boo boo. Unless of course, the child has a latex allergy, then she better have someone who knows her medical history and is advocating for her to avoid anaphylaxis from the wrong choice of a bandage. Such as what a CVS pharmacist might use to cover up the injection site.

There are many decisions for which a teen is pressured daily. Social groups and peer pressure are very powerful at this age. By removing parental consent for medical procedures from the existing law, the new law would leave a minor completely exposed to peer pressure. It would be quite easy for the minor to make a fatally bad decision.

There are also oppositional teens. Those who will simply go off and get a shot because his or her parents have said not to, without any concept of the consequences. Being told after the fact, "you were right," is not going to make the parent of a vaccine injured child feel the slightest bit better. It is simply too late at that point.

There is already a history of bounties for vaccines. 7-11 has offered prizes based on getting the Flu vaccine. By sending in Selfie while getting the shot, the employee is entered into a contest for a monetary prize. In one county in North Carolina, a student has a chance to win an iPad or iPod if they get the recommended vaccines. This can be a strong motivation to do something that the teen may not see as risky. New Jersey has a contest for school children to create vaccine awareness posters and videos. The middle schoolers are encouraged to use "facts." Prizes range up to \$350. Somehow I do not believe that an awareness video showing before and after videos of a vaccine injured child would win, no matter how creatively done.

It is the right and responsibility of the parents to care for the child and turn the child into an adult. That includes making a myriad of medical decisions for the child ranging from before birth, to, in some case, death. The government may have policies and guidelines, but it is ultimately up to the parents to advocate for the child and make the decisions that should make the child a functional adult capable of contributing to society.

No one in local government or federal government has the interests of an individual child in mind as they pass laws, as they are only concerned with the population as whole. What is *safe* at a population level may be deadly at an individual level. The parents are the last line of defense for the child, and the ones that can make a determination if a population based guideline is safe and appropriate for their individual child. The parents have the right to make decisions for the child, and the child has the right to have parents make life altering decisions, at least until such time as the child becomes an adult.

I'd like to give a few examples as to where MD counties or the state has declared minors incapable of making important decisions for themselves. Which is quite reasonable, considering that they are not considered adults nor given adult rights and responsibilities for a reason.

A couple of weeks ago I took my 17 year old son to get a photo ID. He had his passport and other information proving his identity as required by DMV. However, they still required that I prove guardianship. They were not authorized to give him an ID without parental consent.

When I was a minor, I was able to get an unrestricted driver's license at 16. That is no longer possible, as the state has determined that minors are not capable of making decisions regarding their lives, much less others.

Montgomery County has declared that minors are not capable of crossing the street safely. There was a tragic pedestrian accident at Northwest High School. In response, rather than trying to teach the high school students how to safely cross the road at crosswalks, Montgomery County built a fence over a quarter of a mile long to prevent them from escaping the campus grounds except at crosswalks. This is not an indication that the county believes teenagers can make rational decisions.

There is no such thing as a 100% safe medical procedure. No matter how often the phrase "safe and effective is repeated", it does not suddenly become true. Without a parental consent requirement for medical procedures, a minor has no advocate that understands the details of the minor's health and the risks posed by the procedure. Contests, bounties and other forms of manipulation are not reasonable when it comes to invasive medical procedures. What is reasonable is informed consent and parental involvement. I urge you to vote against this bill that weakens parental rights and endangers children.

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