

I am here today to voice my **opposition to HB 87**, which would allow for minor children, as young as 16 years of age, to consent to vaccinations without parental consent. Parents must be involved in and make healthcare decisions for their children.

My experience as a high-school educator, teaching juniors in Baltimore County, leads me to believe that 16 year-old children have neither the maturity, nor the proper brain development to make medical decisions without their parents' input. This current generation of teenagers seems even more prone to impulsivity and irresponsibility. A minor in the state of Maryland is regarded as such because they have not yet reached an age of full responsibility; therefore, major life decisions, such as decisions concerning medical procedures, should be made with input from the child's parents and pediatrician.

There are no magic medicines that are one-size-fits-all, without risk of side effects. Vaccinations are no different. According to the Health Resources and Services Administration's website (hrsa.gov), there has been close to \$4 billion paid out for injuries due to vaccinations. Four billion dollars because of side effects. As is often the case, unless it has happened to us directly or someone we know personally, we have a hard time grasping the tragedies for which those payouts attempted to compensate. Statistics and dollar signs can sometimes have a numbing effect when no one we know personally has been impacted. However, my own neighbor was compensated after her daughter suffered and died from a direct reaction to the Gardasil Vaccine. And I cannot imagine if something like this happened and the parent was completely unaware that their child had even received the vaccination. All medical procedures and medicines carry risk—risks that a teenager cannot possibly be expected or trusted to understand.

As a parent of two children myself, it is my and my doctor's responsibility to take care of them and to make important medical decisions for them. If there are unintended consequences or side effects of a medical treatment, it is also my responsibility to report these concerns to their doctor, and implement the best course of treatment. It is upsetting to me to think that our government would remove such an important and critical oversight—medical decisions—from parents and place that responsibility in the hands of children who aren't even allowed to get a tattoo without their parents' permission.

I would like to close this letter by including this piece on the impulsive nature of teens. Upon reading this, you'll note that the Supreme Court outlawed the death penalty for those under 18, due to their impulsivity. From the piece: "By around 15 or 16, the parts of the brain that arouse a teen emotionally and make him pay attention to peer pressure and the rewards of action — the gas pedal — are probably all set. But the parts related to controlling impulses, long-term thinking and resistance to peer pressure — the brake, mostly in the frontal lobes — are still developing." The article also states, "Experts say that even at ages 16 and 17, when compared to adults, juveniles on average are more: impulsive,...likely to take risks,...reactive to stress,... vulnerable to peer pressure,...[and] prone to focus on short-term payoffs..."

A teenager's brain is hard-wired to take risks, not render sound judgement. They are not able to accurately weigh the pros and cons of medical decisions without input from their caregivers. In order to keep parental rights in Maryland intact, I oppose HB87 and SB135. Thank you.

Sean Carr
1210 Corbett Rd
Monkton, MD 21111

* (\$3,942,157,799.14)