



**2020 SESSION
POSITION PAPER**

BILL: HB 87 – Public Health – Immunizations – Minor Consent (Access to Vaccines Act)
COMMITTEE: Health and Government Operations Committee
POSITION: Letter of Support
BILL ANALYSIS: HB 87 would authorize a health care provider to provide an immunization to a minor without consent of a parent or other individual who has authority to consent to a minor’s immunization, if the minor consents to the immunization, is at least 16 years of age, the health care provider determines the minor is able to make an informed consent to the immunization, and the health care provider makes available information about the immunization to the minor in the same way they would notify the minor’s parent or other individual who has authorization of the minor.

POSITION RATIONALE: The Maryland Association of County Health Officers (MACHO) **supports HB 87.** Access to vaccination is a key element of preventive healthcare. In an era of continued misinformation via social media and other avenues, an increasing number of parents have been swayed to fear vaccination despite over a century of overwhelming scientific evidence documenting safety and efficacy. As a result, a higher number of teens are currently unvaccinated *than at any time over the past five decades.*

Many teens will leave for college or vocational opportunities prior to their 18th birthday. As they leave home, they will be in new environments that place them at increased risk for meningitis, measles, and other potentially harmful, and in some cases fatal, communicable diseases.

Although 16- and 17-year-old brains have not necessarily matured to handle certain decisions, their cognitive abilities are clearly capable of weighing the necessary risks and benefits of vaccination. For decades, Maryland has recognized the ability of this same age group to make independent decisions regarding other types of healthcare, including reproductive health, mental health, and substance use services.

Given the limited scope of this bill and the clear health benefits it will provide to those at risk of infectious diseases, HB 87 deserves passage.

For these reasons, the Maryland Association of County Health Officers submits this **letter of support for HB 87.** For more information, please contact Ruth Maiorana, MACHO Executive Director at рмаioral@jhu.edu or 410-614-6891. *This communication reflects the position of MACHO.*