



**Mission:** *To improve public health in Maryland through education and advocacy*

**Vision:** *Healthy Marylanders living in Healthy Communities*

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## **HB87 – Public Health-Immunizations-Minor Consent (Access to Vaccines Act)**

Hearing Date: 2/12/20

Committee: Health and Government Operations

Position: SUPPORT

Thank you Delegate Pendergrass, Delegate Pena-Melnyk, and all members of the Health and Government Operations Committee. Thank you, especially, Delegate Korman, for introducing this important public health legislation about Minor Consent for Immunizations. We submit this testimony on behalf of the Maryland Public Health Association to express our support for House Bill 87, Public Health-Immunizations-Minor Consent (Access to Vaccines Act). We'd like to stress why we support this bill and feel it's very important for Marylanders.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the American Medical Association (AMA), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), our organization, and many other leading scientific advocates for public health, vaccines are one of the most cost-effective ways to avoid disease and death. One of the biggest threats to public health, on the other hand, is vaccine hesitancy, often due to misinformation. The 30% rise in measles cases worldwide over the past few years is attributed to people's reluctance to get vaccinated. Standardized immunization practices have demonstrated improvements in the health of youth and young adults by preventing conditions like tetanus, pertussis, meningococcal disease, influenza, and genital warts, as well as later adult outcomes like cervical and other human papilloma virus related cancers.

Currently, there are 18 states (Alabama, Alaska, Arkansas, Delaware, Idaho, Illinois, Kansas, Louisiana, Maine, Massachusetts, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Washington, and West Virginia) that have allowed "mature minors" to make their own immunization decisions (someone who is old enough to understand and appreciate the consequences of a medical procedure, as determined by their physician, may do so). In some states, the laws allow for minors as young as 12 years old to independently consent to vaccinations without parental approval. HB87's guidance for minors at least 16 years old is reasonable and necessary to reduce barriers to life-saving immunizations before teens are exposed to dangerous viruses.

The Maryland Public Health Association (MdPHA) is a nonprofit, statewide organization of public health professionals dedicated to improving the lives of all Marylanders through education efforts and advocacy of public policies consistent with our vision of healthy Marylanders living in healthy communities. MdPHA is the state affiliate of the American Public Health Association, a nearly 150-year-old professional organization dedicated to improving population health and reducing the health disparities that plague our state and our nation.

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