

I am writing to oppose HB 1084. This bill includes a lot of parts, but the section I am most offended by is where it calls for the MDH to develop and submit to the General Assembly an update to the COVID-19 vaccination plan. This is putting Maryland school children at risk for medical complications to the COVID-19 vaccine, even and especially for those without a medical exemption, which is the vast majority of families, unknowingly putting their child at risk if the State mandates a vaccine for school children. This should ALWAYS be a family and medical provider decision.

HB 1084 is calling for an update to the COVID-19 vaccination plan required under Chapters 29 and 32 of the 2021 Special Session that includes: (please take very careful notice of the language highlighted)

- specified elements from the 2021 plan for calendar 2022 and 2023, including information on the categories of residents who will receive priority access to HB 1084/ Page 3 vaccines, the timeline for providing vaccines, target metrics, and a specified vaccine distribution strategy;
- a requirement that MDH keep track of the quantity of COVID-19 vaccines that it will have available and when vaccines will be available for administration;
- recommendations for approaches Medicaid can take to incentivize health care provider vaccination efforts, vaccination among Medicaid enrollees, and managed care organizations to develop and meet vaccination targets;
- measures to increase vaccination rates among the unvaccinated; and
- a strategy to incentivize individuals to receive a third COVID-19 dose and any future vaccines recommended by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

I can't stress enough how firmly and strongly I stand up with my family, my peers, my community, my school communities both in public and private, my church community, my business and my fellow Americans and proudly declare that any further time spent or effort to make this vaccine mandatory is not acceptable. Between the low risk to children, the low efficacy of the vaccine and the risk of complications that make this vaccine merely a preventative measure, no better efficacy than obtaining the virus naturally, which we all have at this point.

Florida's top medical official, Surgeon General Dr. Joseph Ladapo just this week said that the state will formally recommend against COVID-19 vaccinations for healthy children. "We're kind of scraping at the bottom of the barrel, particularly with healthy kids, in terms of actually being able to quantify with any accuracy and any confidence the even potential of benefit," he added. The guidance declares healthy children aged 5 to 17, "may not benefit from receiving the currently available COVID-19 vaccine."

Ladapo said he was going to advocate for a "public health" approach to handling the pandemic and other concerns, and said he will "completely reject fear as a way of making policies."

"It is essential for health care practitioners to analyze existing data on the COVID-19 vaccine alongside parents when deciding to vaccinate children," said the surgeon general. "Based on currently available data, the risks of administering COVID-19 vaccination among healthy children may outweigh the benefits. That is why these decisions should be made on an individual basis, and never mandated."

Emergency response physician Joseph Fraiman said during the roundtable: "If you have a healthy child, the chances of that child dying are incredibly low, essentially close to zero, if not actually zero." Epidemiologist Tracy Hoeg declared: "The argument for vaccinating children for the societal benefit is not what it used to be...Especially for healthy children, we don't know if they've benefited from being vaccinated on top of already having infection."

Ladapo asserted in his Department of Health (DOH) guidance Tuesday that the decision to vaccinate healthy children "should be made on an individual basis" and children under 16 with no significant underlying health conditions "are at little to no risk of severe illness complications from COVID-19." The surgeon general also proclaimed via tweet: "when overall risk is low, & there is a higher than anticipated rate of serious adverse events in clinical trials, it is unclear if benefits outweigh the risks," a repetition of one of the central arguments made in the DOH notice.