

HB 87- Minor Consent (Access to Vaccines Act)
Sarah Cusack, Love Maryland PAC
OPPOSE

Dear Honorable Members of the HGO Committee,

My name is Sarah Cusack. I am a Physical Therapist living in District 14. For 10 years I worked in Pediatrics at the Kennedy Krieger Institute in Baltimore, on their Inpatient Rehabilitation Unit. During my 10 years, I treated a variety of severe adverse reactions to vaccinations to include: Transverse Myelitis, Guillain-Barre Syndrome, Acute Disseminated Encephalomyelitis, and Encephalopathy.

It is very difficult to explain how tragic and life altering these injuries are. I am deeply disturbed by bills that I see across this nation that intend to chip away at true informed consent and consumer protections when it comes to vaccination.

I was fortunate to meet with Senator Feldman, the sponsor of the cross-filed bill. He explained that the bill was intended to help a 16 or 17-year-old who got early acceptance to college and is unable to live in the dorms because they are missing a vaccination. He also described a minor who cannot get a job at a day camp because they are missing a vaccine. The Senator agreed with me that in light of the very high vaccination rates in our state, this is an unlikely scenario for many Maryland children. There is not a need for this bill in our state. I explained to him that the risk to children of injury and delayed diagnosis if the parent is unaware that the child received the vaccine, outweighs the benefit of the bill.

Senator Feldman was not aware that vaccine manufacturers are NOT LIABLE for their vaccine products on the childhood schedule. This is a result of the 1986 National Childhood Vaccine Injury Act. Vaccine manufacturers were inundated with injury and death law suits. They threatened the Congress that if they wanted a national vaccination program, they could pay for the damages. This led the way for the creation of the Federal Vaccine Injury Compensation program or VICP. Tax payers pay for injuries and deaths through a tax on all vaccines that it put into the Federal fund. To date, more than \$4.2 Billion dollars has been paid to the injured and the families of the deceased. And, many families have never even heard of the fund, much less filed. Many families that do file never get through the arduous process. Families that are awarded settlements often report that it takes 8-10 years.

Senator Feldman appeared concerned when I told him that minors cannot file in the Federal VICP.

If a child is injured, only the parents will be responsible for the child's care. A minor child cannot file for compensation through the VICP. They need their parents to do that. If they can't file for compensation, they shouldn't be able to consent to the procedure that carries the risk of requiring compensation. Too young to file... Too young to consent.

Please feel free to reach out with any questions or concerns. Thank you very much for taking the time to read. I appreciate it.

Sarah Cusack, MPT
District 14