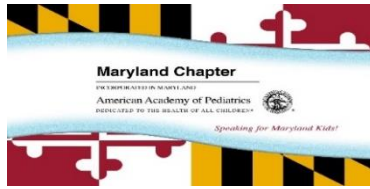




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TO: The Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass, Chair
Members, House Health and Government Operations Committee
The Honorable Marc Korman

FROM: Pamela Metz Kasemeyer
J. Steven Wise
Danna L. Kauffman
Richard A. Tabuteau

DATE: February 12, 2020

RE: **SUPPORT** – House Bill 87 – *Public Health – Immunizations – Minor Consent (Access to Vaccines Act)*

On behalf of the Maryland State Medical Society, the Maryland Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Mid-Atlantic Association of Community Health Centers, and the Maryland Section of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, we submit this letter of **support** for House Bill 87.

One of the greatest public health success stories is the remarkable decrease in infectious diseases due to the use of vaccines. The overwhelming scientific evidence shows that vaccines are among the most effective and safest interventions to both prevent individual illness and protect public health. The recent outbreaks of measles, pertussis, mumps and other vaccine-preventable conditions driven by parents who are refusing to immunize their children is not only putting those children at risk but also the community more broadly.

Maryland should be applauded for its historic recognition of the need to provide minors the right to access health care services without obtaining the consent of a parent or guardian under certain circumstances. Emancipated minors, those married with children, or self-supporting and living separate from their parents or guardian can access the full range of health care services. Minors who suffer life threatening health injuries can access emergency services. There are also a range of health care services that reflect conditions or health care needs that require access to medically necessary services but requiring the consent of a parent or guardian often is the barrier to accessing care.

Given the growing voice of parents who oppose the vaccination of their children, House Bill 87 provides necessary access to vaccinations for minors age 16 and older. Without the ability to consent to immunizations, minors under the age of 18, whose parent or guardian will not consent to immunizations, will be unable to attend college or will miss out on potential employment opportunities until they are 18 as vaccinations are required for college admission and sometimes by employers.

Many children go unvaccinated as anti-vaccine related messages and advertisements target parents with misinformation. Allowing mature minors to provide informed consent to vaccinations will ensure these patients can access this critical preventive care. Twenty-one states currently allow health providers to give vaccines in some capacity. In many of those states, there is no age restriction, or the restriction starts as young as 12 or 14 years. A number of other states are currently considering legislation similar to House Bill 87. A favorable report is strongly requested.

For more information call:

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