



**2023 SESSION
POSITION PAPER**

BILL: HB 1161 - Public Health – Human Papillomavirus Vaccine – Information and Informed Consent (Christina’s Law)
COMMITTEE: House Health and Government Operations Committee
POSITION: Letter of Concern
BILL ANALYSIS: HB 1161 would require a health care provider, before each administration of a human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine, to provide an individual or an individual's parent or guardian with a certain information sheet and obtain written consent on a certain form.

POSITION RATIONALE: The Maryland Association of County Health Officers (MACHO) expresses significant concern about HB 1161. This bill would supplant standard medical consent procedures developed by health professionals, create unnecessary administrative burdens on providers, and most importantly, perpetuate misinformation about HPV vaccines specifically, and vaccination generally.

More than 135 million doses of HPV vaccines have been administered since its approval by the FDA in 2006. Per the CDC, “More than 15 years of monitoring and research have accumulated reassuring evidence that human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination provides safe, effective, and long-lasting protection against cancers caused by HPV infections.”¹ Safety profiles of these vaccines are equivalent or superior to vaccines used to prevent measles, polio, meningitis, and other dangerous pathogens. In contrast, the **consequences of HPV infection** and the complications of treating the precancers and cancers caused by the virus range from hemorrhage to infertility to death.

The HPV vaccine protects against six different kinds of cancer (cervical, anal, throat, penile, vaginal, and vulvar) that are caused by human papillomavirus infection. More than 90% of cervical cancers are caused by HPV. In 2018 there were 215 Maryland residents newly diagnosed with cervical cancer, and 81 deaths resulting from the disease. As with many other types of cancers, racial and ethnic minorities suffer disproportionately. Vaccination is recognized by expert groups including the CDC, American Academy of Pediatrics, and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists as the best way to prevent these cancers and eliminate health disparities. Consenting patients in culturally competent ways is the professionally preferred way to achieve informed decision making. HB 1161 would require clinicians to present patients and their parents with a flawed list of possible complications that seem designed to scare rather than educate.

HPV vaccines have proven to be extremely safe and effective. Consent prior to vaccination should be left to the professional standards of licensed health care clinicians. For these reasons MACHO expresses concerns with HB 1161. For more information, please contact Ruth Maiorana, Executive Director, MACHO, at rmaiora1@jhu.edu or 410-937-1433.

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/hpv/hcp/vaccine-safety-data.html>