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BILL: SB 821

TITLE: Primary and Secondary Education - Student Immunization - Temporary Admission Period

DATE: February 21, 2025

POSITION: Favorable

COMMITTEE: Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee

CONTACT: Mary Pat Fannon, Executive Director, PSSAM

The Public School Superintendents' Association of Maryland (PSSAM), on behalf of all twenty-four public school superintendents, **supports** Senate Bill 821.

This bill requires each county board of education to grant students temporary school admission if their parent or guardian provides proof of an immunization appointment scheduled within 60 calendar days of enrollment. Currently, regulations allow temporary admission only if the appointment is scheduled within 20 days of enrollment.

Local superintendents recognize the importance of immunization policies in protecting the health and safety of all students and staff. However, PSSAM also acknowledges that some students—particularly newcomers and those in areas with limited medical facilities—face challenges meeting the required timeframes. There are also circumstances outside of the control of students and families, or the public at large. For instance, this year there was a shortage in some vaccines that caused delays in public health clinics in Maryland, affecting some of our most vulnerable students. Regardless of the reason for a delay in obtaining the required immunization or presenting the official paperwork, these students are excluded from official enrollment counts, leading to significant losses in education funding each year.

More importantly than districts losing funding, the current regulations prevent students from receiving instructional services until immunization requirements are met, creating barriers to timely school attendance. Ensuring that students can begin school on time is essential for their academic success. Again, while PSSAM recognizes the importance of widespread immunization for public health, the existing timeline does not account for the unique challenges faced by some students and their families.

For these reasons, PSSAM **supports** Senate Bill 821 and kindly requests a **favorable** committee report.