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**HB 1315: Health Insurance - Coverage for Child Wellness Services - Immunizations
Position: FAVORABLE
March 10, 2025
House Health and Government Operations Committee**

Chair Peña-Melnyk, Vice Chair Cullison and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in favor of House Bill 1315. My name is Abraham Ipe, MD, and I am a Maryland resident and a pediatric physician at Children's National Hospital. Children's National has been serving the nation's children since 1870. Nearly 60% of our patients are residents of Maryland, and we maintain a network of community-based pediatric practices, surgery centers and regional outpatient centers in Maryland.

Vaccination represents one of the most significant public health successes in medical history and remains one of my primary responsibilities as a pediatrician. Young children are especially vulnerable to serious bacterial and viral infections, which can lead to significant illness and even death. Immunizations have dramatically reduced the consequences of diseases that once devastated pediatric populations, such as measles and polio. Vaccination has saved thousands of children from serious illness, hospitalization, and long-term consequences of disease.

Vaccines have been demonstrated to be effective and safe for children. The Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS) provides ongoing safety profile for all recommended childhood vaccines and has consistently demonstrated that they are safe for children. It is essential that the state of Maryland has the flexibility to align with the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention or the American Academy of Pediatrics Child and Adolescent Immunization Schedule by Age, as outlined in HB 1315. As of today, there are 165 cases of measles in the country, and sadly one child has died in Texas due to measles. According to available CDC data, 1 in 5 children infected with measles will be hospitalized, 1-3 in 1000 will develop significant encephalitis, or infection of the brain with long-term consequences, or die from measles. The state of Maryland has around 1.5 million

children who are at risk of exposure and deserve protection. Although Maryland has currently achieved “herd immunity,” a term that describes a community protected by mutual immunity when >95% vaccination rates are achieved, this is not the case for most states. The national vaccination rate for US kindergarteners dropped to 92.7% in 2023-2024. This is an emerging public health emergency that requires immediate attention, and one that is not just applicable to measles. Each of the vaccine-preventable diseases have significant health effects for children that must be avoided. As the American Academy of Pediatrics states, “One death from a preventable disease is one too many.”

As pediatricians, it is our duty to do whatever we can to protect children and keep them healthy. In this role, vaccines are among the most powerful and effective tools to do so. As such, House Bill 1315 would provide invaluable support for pediatricians in Maryland to serve our children. By following CDC or AAP guidelines, children in Maryland will be best equipped to grow up strong and healthy.

I applaud the Maryland General Assembly for introducing this important legislation, which will have life-long benefits for our state’s youngest residents and their families and respectfully request a favorable report on House Bill 1315. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony. I am happy to respond to any questions you may have.

For more information, please contact:

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References:

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