



Mission: To improve public health in Maryland through education and advocacy ***Vision:*** Healthy Marylanders living in Healthy Communities

Testimony In Support of SB 385
Public Health – Recommendations for Immunizations Screenings and Preventive Services – Pharmacist Administration and Required Health Insurance Coverage
The Vax Act
Before the Senate Finance Committee
By: Maryland Public Health Association (MdPHA)
February 10, 2026

Chair Beidle, Vice-Chair Hayes, and Members of the Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit supportive testimony for Senate Bill 385. Thanks in large part to the leadership of this Committee, Maryland consistently [ranks as one of the best states for health care](#) in the country. Now, as our state faces new threats from federal actions that undermine public health infrastructure, it is critical that we continue to set a national example in innovative approaches to ensuring the health and well-being of our residents. SB 385, the Vax Act, would empower our Department of Health to establish official recommendations for immunizations, health screenings, and preventive services in our state that are grounded in established clinical guidance. This is especially important as we see increasingly politicized and conflicting information coming from federal agencies on these important practices.

Vaccines remain one of the most staggering public health successes in human history. Estimated to have saved over 154 million lives worldwide since 1974, immunizations have been a cost-effective way to prevent disease and improve life expectancy.ⁱ Unfortunately, vaccination—like many impactful public health measures—is a victim of its own success. As rates of preventable diseases like polio, measles, and rubella have dwindled, the public is less aware of the need for continued vaccination. With a deluge of misinformation and disinformation surrounding the safety and efficacy of immunizations, we have seen an increase in vaccine hesitancy, which has threatened herd immunity.ⁱⁱ Despite vaccines historically being an integral part of the United States’ public health agenda, recent actions at the federal level to limit vaccine recommendations, dismiss experts, and reduce research funding have greatly shifted the priorities of our federal agencies. It is our opinion that Marylanders can no longer trust that the recommendations provided by the CDC are grounded in science and made in the best interest of public health. SB 385 decouples Maryland’s guidance for these important measures from increasingly contradictory federal recommendations, ensuring our residents have a trusted source in their health decisions that is based on clinical evidence.

Vaccines and preventive care are essential tools for our public health, and it is critical that Marylanders have access to trusted guidance as well as insurance coverage and access to these services. This legislation would establish comprehensive procedures that ensure Maryland’s public health decisions are rooted in science, preserve access to critical care tools, and allow for our state to remain a national leader on health care.

We would like to thank Governor Wes Moore, Maryland Department of Health Secretary Dr. Meena Seshamani, Senate President Bill Ferguson, and all of the co-sponsors of this legislation for their attention to this matter. We urge a favorable report of Senate Bill 385.

The Maryland Public Health Association (MdPHA) is a nonprofit, statewide organization of public health professionals dedicated to improving the lives of all Marylanders through education, advocacy, and collaboration. We support public policies consistent with our vision of healthy Marylanders living in healthy, equitable, communities. MdPHA is the state affiliate of the American Public Health Association, a nearly 145-year-old professional organization dedicated to improving population health and reducing the health disparities that plague our state and our nation.

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ⁱ Shattock AJ, Johnson HC, Sim SY, et al. Contribution of vaccination to improved survival and health: modelling 50 years of the Expanded Programme on Immunization. *Lancet*. 2024;403(10441):2307-2316. doi:10.1016/S0140-6736(24)00850-X

ⁱⁱ Dubé E, Laberge C, Guay M, Bramadat P, Roy R, Bettinger J. Vaccine hesitancy: an overview. *Hum Vaccin Immunother*. 2013;9(8):1763-1773. doi:10.4161/hv.24657