



**2026 SESSION
POSITION PAPER**

BILL: SB 385 - Public Health - Recommendations for Immunizations, Screenings, and Preventive Services - Pharmacist Administration and Required Health Insurance Coverage (The Vax Act)

COMMITTEE: House – Health Committee

POSITION: Letter of Support

BILL ANALYSIS: Senate Bill 385 directs the Maryland Secretary of Health to make recommendations available to the public, health care practitioners, and the Maryland Insurance Administration on immunizations, screenings, and preventive services for infants, children, and adults. The bill directs the Secretary’s recommendations to be made in accordance with applicable recommendations of three authoritative medical organizations, while also considering guidance from the Maryland Statewide Advisory Commission on Immunizations and several federal agencies. The bill authorizes pharmacists to administer vaccinations in certain instances and directs insurance carriers to provide coverage for recommended immunizations, screenings, and preventive services.

POSITION RATIONALE: The Maryland Association of County Health Officers (MACHO) supports SB 385. In early 2026, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services reduced from 17 to 11 the number of recommended vaccines for children, removing the recommendations for vaccines against flu, COVID-19, rotavirus, hepatitis A, hepatitis B, and meningococcal meningitis.¹ While families will still have free access to all 17 vaccines, confusion about what the changes mean and the impact of the federal recommendations on families will likely lead to confusion and falling vaccination rates.¹ The changes in the federal recommendations were widely criticized by the scientific community as being made without following an established, deliberative process that includes internal government review with experts from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention and other agencies, as well as consideration and public debate via meetings of the Advisory Committee of Immunization Practices.²

Senate Bill 385 is an important attempt to rectify these actions taken by the federal government and will enable Maryland to continue its longstanding protection of public health for its residents. States in the U.S. have primary responsibility for determining which vaccines are recommended for routine use and which are required for school attendance. In light of changing federal guidelines, many states have taken steps to de-link state policies and recommendations from those coming from the federal government: analysis by the Kaiser Family Foundation analysis found that 24 states no longer use HHS/CDC as a source for vaccine recommendations (up from [just 13 in September 2025](#)) and instead turn to state level or external expert groups such as the American Academy of Pediatrics for guidance.² Senate Bill 385 would move Maryland in line with these states, as the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology, and the American Academy of Family Physicians are named in the bill as the authoritative medical organizations that the Secretary should consult in making recommendations. MDH will also consult with the Maryland State Immunization Committee.

For these reasons, MACHO submits this Letter of Support for the Committee’s consideration on SB 385. For more information, please contact Ruth Maiorana, Executive Director, MACHO, at rmaiora1@jhu.edu or 410-937-1433. *This communication reflects the position of MACHO.*

References

- ¹ <https://publichealth.jhu.edu/2026/hhss-abridged-vaccine-recommendations>
- ² <https://www.kff.org/other-health/the-new-federal-vaccine-schedule-what-changed/>

