



Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Meena Seshamani, M.D., Ph.D., Secretary

April 2, 2026

The Honorable Heather Bagnall
Chair, House Health Committee
240 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Senate Bill 385 – Public Health – Recommendations for Immunizations, Screenings, and Preventive Services - Pharmacist Administration and Required Health Insurance Coverage (The Vax Act)

Dear Chair Bagnall and Committee members:

The Maryland Department of Health (the Department) respectfully submits this letter of support as amended for Senate Bill (HB) 385 – Public Health - Recommendations for Immunizations, Screenings, and Preventive Services – Pharmacist Administration and Required Health Insurance Coverage (The Vax Act).

This bill establishes new authority for the Secretary of Health to issue official recommendations for immunizations, screenings and preventive services for Maryland, effective July 1, 2026. It requires the state to follow the authoritative guidance of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP) and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG). The bill ensures coverage without cost-sharing in commercial insurance plans regulated by the Maryland Insurance Administration (MIA) and authorizes pharmacists to administer recommended vaccines. The bill currently before the Committee passed the Senate on March 23 and is identical to the version passed by the House last month.

The Department strongly supports this legislation as a means to protect broad access to vaccines, screenings and preventive services for all Marylanders based on rigorous scientific review and clinical guidance. The bill will allow the Department to more effectively fulfill its mission to safeguard the health and well-being of Marylanders.

Currently, Maryland law ties vaccine coverage and administration to the recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practice (ACIP) and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control

and Prevention (CDC), as has been the case in most states for decades.¹ Over the past year, the Department has needed to repeatedly react to federal changes in order to maintain access to evidence-based interventions through standing orders, clinician guidance, and public communications. Public health leaders are concerned that other federal recommendations for screenings and preventive services - such as cancer screenings, developmental screenings, family planning services and health counseling - may similarly depart from the established processes. While Maryland has navigated rapid shifts in national infrastructure and policy through stop-gap measures, the Vax Act would move the Department from a reactive to a proactive posture.

As heard from the wide range of healthcare professionals who testified before this Committee, the Vax Act supports providers with clear, consistent guidance aligned with standards of care developed by trusted medical organizations. The bill also preserves Maryland's broad vaccine accessibility through pharmacies. The Department worked closely with MIA and stakeholders to craft amendments to include additional steps when new preventive services are recommended.

Importantly, the Vax Act does not create new mandates for individuals to receive any vaccine or preventive service. Instead, it safeguards the right of Marylanders to access evidence-based information and clinical guidance, ensuring they can make informed health decisions in consultation with their providers. This bill upholds the transparent, science-driven processes that have historically reduced disease and increased life expectancy across our state.

No new funding is required to enact this legislation, as the staff time necessary to issue Maryland-specific recommendations can be absorbed with existing resources. The Department anticipates economic and societal benefits, as vaccines and preventive healthcare reduce illnesses, hospitalizations, deaths and disability, while also mitigating financial burdens, missed work and school, caregiver strain, and downstream costs to families and communities.

If you would like to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact Meghan Lynch, Director of Governmental Affairs at meghan.lynch@maryland.gov.

Sincerely,



Meena Seshamani, M.D., Ph.D.
Secretary of Health

¹ Association and State and Territorial Health Officials, Impact of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices Recommendations on State Law, June 23, 2025, <https://www.astho.org/topic/resource/impact-of-acip-recommendations-on-state-law/>.