



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

February 26, 2026

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

RE: House Bill 637 – 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 for House Bill (HB) 637 – 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 Colleges of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG). The bill also ensures coverage without cost-sharing in commercial insurance plans regulated by the Maryland Insurance Administration (MIA) and authorizes pharmacists to administer recommended vaccines.

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 proposal will allow the Department to more effectively fulfill its mission to safeguard the health and well-being of Marylanders.

Current 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 Anticipating in 2025 that changes in federal leadership could disrupt established and transparent processes for vaccine

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/>.

recommendations, the Maryland General Assembly bound vaccine access to ACIP's 2024 immunization schedule. In part due to this action, Maryland was among the top three states in vaccine access last year.²

Even so, 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. Further, public health leaders are concerned that 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 scientific processes. While Maryland has navigated rapid shifts in national infrastructure and policy through stop-gap measures, HB 637 would move the Department from a reactive posture to a proactive authority. It would protect Marylanders' access to vaccines, screenings, and preventive services grounded in rigorous science.

The proposal also supports healthcare 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.

Importantly, HB 637 does not create new mandates for individuals to receive any vaccine or preventive service. Rather, it preserves access to recommended interventions and evidence-based information so individuals can make informed health decisions. This bill upholds the processes, transparency, and public health progress that have reduced morbidity and increased life expectancy.

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

² Kaiser Family Foundation, Tracking State Actions on Vaccine Policy and Access, Sept 24, 2025, <https://www.kff.org/state-health-policy-data/tracking-state-actions-on-vaccine-policy-and-access/>.