



February 26, 2026

The Honorable Heather Bagnall
Chair, House Health Committee
241 Taylor House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: HB 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 Health Care Commission (MHCC) respectfully submits this letter in support of House Bill (HB) 637.

HB 637 requires the Secretary of Health to issue recommendations for certain immunizations, screenings, and preventive services based on evidence-based scientific and clinical guidance; updates the authority of pharmacists to administer certain vaccinations; modifies health insurance coverage requirements for specified immunizations, screenings, and preventive services; repeals obsolete statutory language related to the pertussis vaccine; and generally relates to immunizations, screenings, and preventive services.

Vaccination protects not only individuals, but entire communities. When a high percentage of the population is vaccinated, the spread of disease slows or stops, providing critical protection to those who are most vulnerable — such as infants, older adults, pregnant individuals, and people with compromised immune systems who may be unable to receive certain vaccines themselves. This collective protection, commonly referred to as community immunity, is essential to preventing disease outbreaks.

Vaccinations are a cornerstone of primary care, as they prevent disease before it begins and reduce avoidable illness, complications, and long-term health care costs. In primary care settings, vaccines are delivered within trusted, ongoing patient-provider relationships that allow clinicians to assess individual risk, address patient concerns, and ensure immunizations are administered safely and on schedule throughout the lifespan. Routine immunization in primary care protects individual patients while strengthening community health by reducing outbreaks that strain clinics, hospitals, and public health systems. By prioritizing vaccination, the health care system shifts from reactive treatment to proactive prevention — keeping patients healthier, improving access to care, and fostering more resilient communities.

The safety of vaccines is supported by decades of rigorous scientific research, continuous monitoring, and regulatory oversight. Vaccines approved for public use undergo extensive clinical testing and are subject to ongoing post-approval surveillance to ensure they meet high standards for safety and effectiveness. Serious adverse reactions are rare, while the risks associated with vaccine-preventable diseases are well documented and significantly greater.

For these reasons, the Maryland Health Care Commission strongly supports HB 637 and urges a favorable report.

If you have any questions or if we may provide you with any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me at douglas.jacobs@maryland.gov or 410-764-3566 or Ms. Tracey DeShields, Director of Policy Development and External Affairs, at tracey.deshields2@maryland.gov.

Sincerely,



Douglas Jacobs, MD, MPH
Executive Director

cc:
Health Committee Members

