



WCAAP/WSMA STATEMENT SUPPORTING SENATE BILL 5841

February 5, 2019

The Washington Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (WCAAP) and the Washington State Medical Association (WSMA) support Senate Bill 5841 which eliminates exemptions for personal or philosophical reasons for vaccines required for childhood school attendance.

Timely immunization with all of the vaccines recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practice are important to protect every child against serious, potentially disabling, sometimes life-threatening infectious diseases. There is robust evidence that each of these universally recommended vaccines is both safe and effective.

Adherence to the recommended vaccine schedule is necessary to prevent highly contagious diseases like pertussis and measles. To protect others who cannot be immunized due to health issues, weakened immune systems, or age, a high percentage of the community must be fully immunized.

While immunization rates in Washington State have improved in recent years, we still have work to do. Repeated outbreaks in our state, including the current measles outbreak, demonstrate the risk to the community when residents choose to forgo immunization against vaccine-preventable diseases. Allowing personal and philosophical exemptions exposes children to significant and preventable health risks because the percentage of the community that is fully immunized is not high enough to prevent outbreaks.

States such as California and Vermont that have eliminated the personal/philosophical exemption have seen non-medical exemptions decrease and overall vaccination rates rise—affording greater protection to communities and individuals.

By disallowing personal or philosophical exemptions to vaccines required for school admission, SB 5841 would help us to achieve the level of immunity required to protect Washington State children and families against outbreaks of measles and other vaccine-preventable diseases.