



WCAAP/WSMA STATEMENT SUPPORTING HOUSE BILL 1638

Written by WCAAP Vaccine Committee; modified and approved by Executive Committee of WCAAP Board and WSMA Executive Committee

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The Washington Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Washington State Medical Association support House Bill 1638 which states that *philosophical or personal objections may not be used to exempt a child from measles, mumps and rubella vaccine.*

Over the past decade Washington State has experienced repeated outbreaks of measles due to multiple importations of the disease by residents who have chosen to forego measles immunization, then traveled to an endemic area abroad, contracted measles and unknowingly introduced the disease into their home communities. In these instances, measles has spread, primarily among other electively unimmunized persons, causing costly, disruptive outbreaks.

While Washington State's childhood immunization rates have generally improved over the past decade, we have not been able to achieve and sustain the high rate of measles immunization required to prevent community outbreaks. Among vaccine preventable diseases, measles is unique because of its extraordinary contagiousness, not even requiring direct contact between an infected person and a susceptible community member to transmit the infection.

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.

Our current Washington state immunization laws have not achieved high enough levels of immunization to provide community immunity, as evidenced by recurrent measles outbreaks putting Washington residents at risk.

HB 1638, by disallowing personal or philosophical exemptions to measles, mumps or rubella vaccine, would help us to achieve the level of measles immunity required to protect Washington State communities against outbreaks.