



# REBUTTAL TO REPRESENTATIVE ANDRES VARGAS' VACCINE BRIEFING FLYER BILL H.3999 - WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

## INFORMATION ON VACCINES

### 1 VACCINES ARE NOT SAFE FOR ALL

Negative effects from vaccines are under-reported and under-studied. A study conducted by Harvard Pilgrim found that vaccine reactions occur in 2.6% of people and fewer than 1% of vaccine adverse events are reported to the CDC and FDA. In 2011 and 2013 the Institute of Medicine acknowledged significant gaps in research and data regarding risks of vaccine injury. The data showed the vast limitations to our knowledge of the risks associated with vaccines, with little to no true studies to draw conclusions from. This is partly due to limited understanding of the biological processes that underlie adverse events.

### 2 VACCINE TESTING IS NOT THE "GOLD STANDARD"

Vaccine testing is imperfect. They are the only pharmaceutical/medical product that does not require rigorous testing in randomized comparisons against an inert placebo (like saline), the "gold standard," in obtaining FDA licensure. In addition, pre-licensure safety testing for vaccines is conducted and only monitored for a few days instead of the industry standard of 3 to 5 years. Medical products are imperfect and agencies that are responsible for monitoring them are not free from conflicts of interest. Government agencies are imperfect. A recent congressional report, related to the opioid crisis, highlights how pharmaceutical companies tout deceptive misinformation and influence major medical organizations, including the World Health Organization. A recent article in the British Medical Journal also highlights systemic conflicts of interest in the CDC and AAP. No medical product is 100% safe for every person.

### 3 VACCINE INJURIES AND DEATHS COST \$4.6 BILLION

The National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program has paid over \$4.1 billion to over 6000 families for serious vaccine injuries, including deaths. Vaccine manufacturers have NO LIABILITY for vaccines and no incentive to improve them. There are numerous public health issues that are vastly more costly and dangerous to our society, including sky-rocketing rates of chronic illness, depression and addiction. Denying children the right to an education is not acceptable public health policy.

### 4 EXISTING LAWS PROTECT EVERYONE

Massachusetts has one of the highest vaccination rates in the country. The rate of religious exemption is only 1.15% and the majority of those are missing only one or a few vaccines that conflict with sincere moral and religious conscience. Our state is protected from wide outbreaks and denying children the right to attend school will not make us safer.

## REMOVING THE RELIGIOUS EXEMPTION

### 1 RELIGIOUS EXEMPTIONS DO NOT IMPACT THE IMMUNOCOMPROMISED

Most people with compromised immune systems can receive every vaccine on the state mandated schedule, except MMR and Varicella. The high rate of vaccination in our state means there is little risk of a sustained outbreak of measles or other vaccine preventable illness. The immunocompromised are at vastly greater risk from common childhood illnesses than they are from contracting measles. The immunocompromised are protected by school exclusion and quarantine policies that have worked for decades.

### 2 RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IS AN INALIENABLE RIGHT

The right to worship in a "manner consistent with the dictates of one's own conscience without restraint of personal liberty" is explicit in Article II of the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Religious rights are not only enshrined in the Massachusetts Constitution, they are the foundation of our country. Religious beliefs and moral creed need not be defined by a particular organized religion and are protected under our constitution without restriction or distinction. Religious animosity is a dangerous growing trend in the US and the world. It creates fear, hate and divisiveness.

### 3 OTHER STATES' LAWS ARE NOT RELEVANT IN MASSACHUSETTS

Although some states have recently removed religious exemptions, they face serious legal challenges and stark public opposition to these measures. The removal of the right to an education has no place in Massachusetts. We should continue to lead the nation in public health initiatives by focusing on severe threats to public health including access to care, the opioid crisis, the rise of chronic illness and escalating rates of psychiatric and neurological disorders.

### 4 THERE ARE NO OUTBREAKS OF MEASLES IN MASSACHUSETTS

There were 2 cases of measles this year in Massachusetts associated with international travel (according to the Massachusetts Department of Public Health) out of a population of almost 7 million. Neither case spread to anyone else. Massachusetts has extensive school exclusion and quarantine protocols in the event of illness. There is no reason to obliterate fundamental rights to education and religious freedom in the absence of a true emergency. Vargas's bill is discriminatory, predatory, and unnecessary.