

WVHA LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

February 2, 2023

TO: WVHA Grassroots Network

FROM: Tony Gregory, Vice President Legislative Affairs

SUBJECT: NO ON SB 535

This week, [SB 535](#) was introduced creating religious and philosophical exemptions for school attendance vaccines. If passed, this bill will:

1. Allow nonmedical exemptions to school and child-care center immunization requirements;
2. Remove provisional enrollment for immunization requirements; and
3. Remove the medical exemption review process.

[The WV Immunization Network](#) of health care providers and partners like WVHA are initiating a **CALL TO ACTION to oppose this bill**. We're hearing strong legislative interest to advance this bill in the Senate Health Committee and to prevent it from doing so, we're asking health care providers in your community like pediatricians, physicians, nurses, and others **contact Senators to ask them to vote NO on SB 535**.

Contact information for Senators is listed [here](#) but please note that 13 Senators have sponsored the [bill](#). Key message points follow:

The following is a sample message that can be used for phone calls:

"Good afternoon, my name is ___ and I (insert relevant information as applicable... am a healthcare provider, a parent with a child(ren) in ___ County Schools, am a constituent of yours, etc). I am calling to ask you to vote NO on Senate Bill 535, which will result in reduced immunization rates and allow dangerous, yet preventable diseases to return to our schools and state."

Here is sample text that can be used in an email:

"Dear Honorable Senator (insert legislator's last name),

*I (insert relevant information as applicable... am a healthcare provider, a parent with a child(ren) in ___ County Schools, am a constituent of yours, etc.). **I am emailing to ask you to vote NO on SB535**. Our state has one of the most effective school immunization policies in the nation. Over the last several years, four states (California, New York, Maine and Connecticut) have mirrored their school immunization requirements on ours after their states experienced outbreaks of measles that resulted in hospitalizations.*

Allowing nonmedical exemptions will undoubtedly result in reductions in our state's immunization rates, allow preventable diseases that we have worked hard to eliminate to return to our state, and put our school students, school personnel, and their families at risk for these diseases.

*By maintaining high immunization rates among school-age children **our state law has saved lives**. We are very proud of this accomplishment! West Virginia has been doing this right for years and we want to keep doing it right.*

Vote NO on SB 535.

Sincerely,

Your Name

Please let me know if you have any questions or need any additional information as you reach out to your Senators. Thanks.

Tony



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