

February 20, 2019

The Honorable Nancy Barto
Chair, Health and Human Services Committee
Arizona House of Representatives
Arizona State Capitol Complex
1700 W Washington St.
Phoenix, AZ 85007

Re: AMA opposition to H.B. 2470, H.B. 2471 and H.B. 2472

Dear Representative Barto:

On behalf of the American Medical Association (AMA) and our physician and medical student members, I am writing to express our opposition to House Bill (H.B.) 2470, H.B. 2471 and H.B. 2472—legislation, that would discourage adherence to recommended vaccination schedules and leave communities vulnerable to resurgent outbreaks of serious infectious diseases.

One of the greatest public health success stories is the remarkable decrease in infectious diseases due to the use of vaccines. Unfortunately, the immense success of vaccination in America has lulled many parents into complacency with regards to vaccine-preventable diseases like measles, meningitis, polio and diphtheria. In order for previous successes to be maintained, the public and legislators must realize these diseases still exist and can still debilitate and kill. Indeed, the recent and continuing outbreak of measles in Washington State serves to remind us that our nation's children are still vulnerable to these deadly diseases.

Vaccines not only protect the child that receives them, but just as importantly, they protect the health of the community in which the child lives. A scientific study in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* indicated that those who did not receive measles vaccine due to philosophical or religious reasons were 35 times more likely to contract measles, and could potentially increase the incidence of measles in their community by as much as 30 percent.¹ When vaccination levels are high, children who cannot be protected directly by the vaccines are protected because they are not exposed to the disease. This includes infants too young to receive vaccinations and those with medical contraindications such as a child with leukemia who cannot receive the measles vaccine.

As we have unfortunately seen, recent reductions in vaccination coverage threaten to erase many years of progress as nearly-eliminated and preventable diseases return, resulting in illness, disability and death. We must stop this disturbing trend. That is why the AMA opposes H.B. 2470, H.B. 2471 and H.B. 2472. We believe these bills would contribute to the spread of vaccine-preventable diseases.

¹ Daniel Salmon, Michael Haber, Eugene Gangarosa, et al., *Health Consequences of Religious and Philosophical Exemptions from Immunization Laws*, 282 *JAMA* 1, 47-53 (Jul. 1999).

The Honorable Nancy Barto
February 20, 2019
Page 2

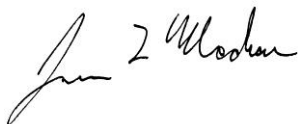
H.B. 2470 would permit religious exemptions from required childhood immunizations, in addition to the personal belief exemption already permitted by Arizona law. This legislation is both unnecessary as no mainstream religion doctrinally prohibits their members from getting vaccinated, and dangerous as non-medical exemptions are a barrier to the high immunization rates necessary for herd immunity and work against the establishment of a successful vaccination program.

H.B. 2471 would require health care providers and the Department of Health Services to disseminate extensive information to parents that overemphasizes the risks of immunizations. Informed consent is fundamental to medical ethics and patients always have the right to receive information and ask questions about recommended immunizations so that they can make well-considered decisions. However, the mandate in H.B. 2471 goes beyond informed consent. Instead of promoting shared decision-making between patients and their providers, this legislation would propagate scare tactics to dissuade parents from seeking life-saving vaccinations for their children.

H.B. 2472 would promote antibody titer tests as an alternative to vaccination. The science simply does not support using a positive titer test to reliably predict protection against a given disease, especially in young children. This legislation would falsely lead parents to believe their children are protected against deadly diseases when they may not be.

We urge the members of the Health and Human Services Committee to reject these dangerous anti-vaccine bills and thank you for your consideration of our views on this important issue. If you need further information, please contact Annalia Michelman, JD, Advocacy Resource Center at annalia.michelman@ama-assn.org or (312) 464-4788.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James L. Madara". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and "M".

James L. Madara, MD

cc: Arizona Medical Association