



H2411 Rep Andres X. Vargas
An Act relative to vaccines and preventing future disease outbreaks.
A destructive, biased 'solution' to a non-existent problem.
<https://malegislature.gov/Bills/192/H2411>

This bill would remove the religious exemption to vaccination, which would deny in-person schooling to children who desperately need it, including those from communities of color and underprivileged backgrounds, and those with special needs. This legislation is driven by discriminatory ideology rather than an evidence-based approach to overall public health. Laws that marginalize children and reinforce bias have no place in the Commonwealth.

1. MA Does Not Have a Vaccination Problem

- a. MA has the highest rates of vaccination and lowest rate of vaccine hesitancy in the country.^{1 2} Our populace is protected.
- b. We have had zero outbreaks of vaccine preventable illness in school-age children in past decade.
- c. Roughly 1% of MA families use a religious exemption. DPH states the majority use the exemption to forgo 1-2 vaccines.
- d. Exemptions have had no correlation with MMR vaccination rates or isolated cases of illness.
- e. Vaccination rates are steady and higher than they were in past decades.³

2. Denying Education Causes Irreparable, Life-long Harm and Promotes Disparity.

- a. Education is critical to achievement, economic stability, and health outcomes.⁴
- b. Lower educational achievement is associated with health disparity and lower life expectancy.^{5 6}
- c. Education promotes health and economic equity.^{7 8}
- d. Loss of access to education is particularly dangerous for the marginalized and those who cannot feasibly or reliably home-school because of systemic disadvantage or high needs.
 - i. People of color
 - ii. Socio-economically disadvantaged
 - iii. Special needs community.
 1. Violates principles of FAPE; Individuals w/ Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

3. The Bill is Discriminatory and Undermines Rights and Equity

- a. This bill demonstrates systemic bias against those with differing religious beliefs.
- b. Children have a right to an education regardless of their or their family's religious beliefs.
- c. Coercive policies undermine the fundamental ethical and human right of free and informed consent.⁹

4. Non-discriminatory, Non-biased Alternatives to Promote Vaccine Uptake & Equity Are Feasible

- a. Schools with sub-optimal vaccination rates tend to be located in socio-economically disadvantaged communities and communities of color.³
- b. No or low rates of religious exemption in these communities—they need support, not coercion, to insure access.
- c. Recommended: Direct support of school nurses to follow-up with families and pediatricians.

**Punitive, coercive measures undermine trust and create backlash.
Support, empathy and education are the keys to healthy communities.**

¹ <https://www.nbcboston.com/news/local/massachusetts-has-lowest-vaccine-hesitancy-rate-in-the-u-s/2362121/>

² <https://wallethub.com/edu/states-that-vaccinate-the-most/66237>

³ <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/school-immunizations>

⁴ <https://societyhealth.vcu.edu/work/the-projects/why-education-matters-to-health-exploring-the-causes.html>

⁵ <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/2372732214549754>

⁶ <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/6303de6b-en.pdf?expires=1619366200&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=EF0B91A99776467B608C65891ED3AB25>

⁷ <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/25995305/>

⁸ <https://www.annualreviews.org/doi/10.1146/annurev-publhealth-031816-044628>

⁹ http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=31058&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

