



THE
IMMUNIZATION
PARTNERSHIP

Public Hearing
Committee on Public Health
Texas House of Representatives
21 April 2021

- Good morning, Chair Klick, Vice Chair Guerra, and members of the Committee. My name is Allison Winnike and I am president and CEO of The Immunization Partnership.
- Our non-profit mission is to eradicate vaccine-preventable diseases by educating the community, advocating for evidence-based public policy, and supporting immunization best practices.
- Thank you for the opportunity to testify in opposition to HB 2856, which would prohibit physicians from dismissing noncompliant patients who may pose an infectious disease risk to other patients.
- Vaccines are one of the safest and most effective public health measures to prevent disease.
- The CDC estimates that vaccination of children born between 1994 and 2018 prevented nearly 420 million illnesses and 27 million hospitalizations.
- And most importantly, those vaccines helped avoid nearly 1 million early deaths.

- Those childhood vaccines also provided an outstanding return on investment.
- Every dollar we spend on childhood vaccines saves Americans \$10.10.
- Vaccinating children born between 1994 and 2018 saved over \$400 billion in direct costs and saved nearly \$2 trillion in societal costs.
- But I want to tell a story of a typical Texas family.
- When I was pregnant with my son two years ago I did what so many expectant parents do:
- I began my search for a pediatrician.
- I asked for recommendations from people I knew;
- I researched pediatricians online, reading their bios and pages and pages of patient reviews, until I had a shortlist of potentially acceptable pediatricians for my darling baby.
- Then I started calling them for interviews.
- The very first question I asked was, “Do you have a fully-vaccinated patient population?”

- My job as a mom is to protect my child from all types of threats, seen and unseen.
- I wasn't for a moment about to bring my newborn baby into a pediatrician's waiting room where there may be unvaccinated children,
- children whose parents chose not to follow the physician's recommendation to protect them from vaccine-preventable diseases.
- And I made those same inquiries when I researched day care centers;
- I have a right to protect my child and I have a right to have him in an environment where he is not exposed to unvaccinated people.
- This bill, HB 2856, takes that right away from me.
- This bill forces my pediatrician and thousands of other Texas pediatricians to make a choice: either open up their waiting rooms to unvaccinated children or stop taking Medicaid patients.
- In 2016 the American Academy of Pediatrics adopted a policy which allows pediatricians to dismiss noncompliant patients who refuse to vaccinate their children.
- That's how important this issue is for pediatricians and for parents.

- Don't strip away our rights to protect our families and our doctor's rights to keep their offices safe for their patients.
- Access to providers is already an issue for Medicaid patients and this bill would just exacerbate the problem.
- Fewer pediatricians will elect to accept Medicaid patients if their ability to dismiss noncompliant patients is taken from them.
- And those who remain in the program will probably see a sizable percentage of their patients leave to join a fully-vaccinated practice.
- We don't need this change in the law; it will do more harm than good.
- Thank you so much for allowing me to testify in opposition to HB 2856. I welcome any questions.