

# MaineHealth

Joint Select Committee on Health & Human Services  
Room 209, Cross State Office Building  
Wednesday, January 3, 2018, 2:30 p.m.

Senator Brakey, Representative Hymanson, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services:

On behalf of MaineHealth, Maine's largest integrated non-profit health care system that provides the full continuum of health care services to the residents of eleven counties in Maine and one in New Hampshire, I am writing in strong support of L.D. 1664, which will allow adoption of the Department of Education and the Department of Health and Human Services' joint major substantive rule changes to Chapters 126 and 261: Immunization Requirements for School Children.

As part of our mission of "Working Together So Maine's Communities are the Healthiest in America," MaineHealth dedicates extensive resources to increasing childhood and adolescent immunization rates. For example, all MaineHealth primary care practices that see children have implemented strategies to increase vaccination rates among their patients and their communities, thereby contributing to the overall vaccination rate of Maine children.

These strategies are working, but alone, they are not enough. By requiring one quadrivalent meningococcal conjugate vaccination for children entering seventh grade and two for those entering twelfth grade (or one dose if the first is received when the child is sixteen years of age or older), this bill would stand to improve Maine's rates of meningococcal vaccination for pre-teens and the booster rate for teens as recommended by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Increased coverage with meningococcal vaccine is also part of the U.S. Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion's Healthy People 2020 objectives.

Data shows that school vaccine requirements have a positive effect on overall vaccine rates in the community and protect public health. For the study, "[Middle School Vaccination Requirements and Adolescent Vaccination Coverage](#)," researchers at the National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases of the CDC found that vaccination requirements were associated with significantly higher vaccination coverage against meningococcal disease (71 percent versus 53 percent).

Currently, Maine is one of only 17 states without a meningococcal vaccination requirement for school entry. In 2015, 82.2 percent of 13-17 year-olds in Maine were vaccinated with one or more doses of meningococcal vaccine, ranking Maine 26<sup>th</sup> in the U.S. and last in New England.

As you may know, meningococcal disease is a serious infectious disease that can lead to severe health complications and death. The U.S. has experienced several recent meningococcal disease outbreaks among adolescents and young adults who are at high risk of infection.

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When adolescents and teens contract these vaccine-preventable diseases, they spread quickly and place high-risk individuals, such as babies, seniors, and those with compromised immune systems in danger. Furthermore, cases and outbreaks of these diseases place a large social, emotional, and financial burden on the patients, their families, the community, and state and healthcare system resources. Even one case can lead to a cascade response by state and local authorities, including those of the public health and education communities.

To help protect the health and wellbeing of all Mainers, I strongly urge the Committee to support L.D. 1664, Resolve Regarding Legislative Review of Portions of Chapters 126 and 261, Immunization Requirements for School Children, Joint Major Substantive Rules of the Department of Education and the Department of Health and Human Services. Please feel free to contact me should you need additional information or if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sarah Calder', written in a cursive style.

Sarah Calder

Director, Government Affairs

MaineHealth

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