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HSLDA

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May 9, 2016

VIA EMAIL

Cindy Findley
Director, Division of Immunization
Department of Health

Karen Molchanow
Executive Director
Department of Education

Re: *Proposed Changes to Pennsylvania Immunization Requirements *
IRRC 3147

To Whom It May Concern:

By way of introduction, the Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA) is a national advocacy organization committed to protecting and advancing the fundamental right of parents to direct the education and upbringing of their children. With over 83,000 member families, we are the world's largest homeschool advocacy organization. We have over 2,800 member families in Pennsylvania.

We are writing concerning IRRC #3147, proposed changes to title 28, chapter 23 of the Pennsylvania Code relating to immunization requirements. We have reviewed the Department of Health's proposal and regulatory analysis of IRRC #3147. We have also reviewed the Joint State Government Commission's report released in May 2016.

HSLDA does not take a position on whether parents should vaccinate their children. Rather, we believe the law should generally defer to a parent's right to make medical decisions for his or her child. We understand that the exemptions to mandatory vaccination will not be changed by IRRC #3147. But for parents who opt to have their children vaccinated and will thus be required to comply with these changes, we do have two concerns.

First, this proposal shortens the eight-month provisional enrollment period for school-age children to a five-day period during which children must receive all single dose vaccines and the

H O M E S C H O O L L E G A L D E F E N S E A S S O C I A T I O N

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next or final dose of multiple dose vaccines, along with a medical certificate documenting a schedule for any subsequent required doses.

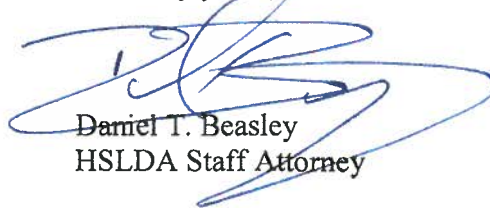
While a shorter provisional enrollment period may be helpful in ensuring accurate reporting, we believe giving parents a mere five school days to fully immunize a child who has not yet received immunizations is unreasonable. There are many reasons why additional flexibility should be allowed including the immediate availability and convenience of competent medical assistance in administering vaccines, scheduling conflicts, family travel, and risk of child illness. There are many unique situations where additional flexibility may be needed. We suggest a 60 day provisional admittance period to replace the proposed five day period.

Second, this proposal requires parents to obtain a statement from a physician, nurse practitioner, or physician's assistant in order to document the history of varicella (chickenpox). *This change is not recommended by the Joint State Government Commission's report.*

Parents should be permitted to provide a statement as evidence of chickenpox. Many parents may decide not to take a child to a medical professional while a child has a minor case of chickenpox. A child who did not go to see a physician but had chickenpox nonetheless should not be required to receive vaccination against a disease to which they are already immune. Additionally, varicella vaccination rates are already meeting the Healthy People 2020 Target Vaccination Rates as reported by the Joint State Government Commission.

Thank you for your attention to these comments. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely yours,



Daniel T. Beasley
HSLDA Staff Attorney

DTB/djd