

Draft: 2/8/10

Date

Dear Legislator:

We, the undersigned, jointly affirm the value, safety, and effectiveness of vaccines in preventing serious illness and saving lives. Immunization has been called one of the ten greatest achievements of the 20th century in improving the health and life expectancy of people living in the U.S.¹ In order to advance the many successes that have been achieved through immunization, we believe that public policy decisions about vaccination should be based on criteria that will:

Reduce barriers to giving safe and effective vaccines

Barriers to vaccination often lead to lower community vaccination rates. Such barriers can arise as a result of lack of knowledge about vaccine indications and contraindications by healthcare providers and/or by patients, logistical issues (e.g., access to immunization services), and missed opportunities (e.g., not giving all vaccinations that are due simultaneously).

Encourage adherence to evidence-based vaccine recommendations

Recommendations for the use of vaccines in the U.S. are determined by expert national committees such as the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the American Academy of Pediatrics Committee on Infectious Diseases. Their recommendations are based on the age at which the body's immune system is capable of making an appropriate response to the vaccine, the need to provide immunity at the earliest possible age at which protection is needed, and the safety and efficacy of the vaccine. These evidence-based decisions have become the standard of care for physicians throughout the country.

Support giving the public science-based immunization information

In today's world, people can get immunization information from many sources other than their physician, such as over the Internet, in newspapers and magazines, as well as from friends and other social contacts. Although this plethora of information can help the public make more informed health decisions for their families, it can also be a source of misinformation. It is imperative that all information on vaccines and immunization communicated by our state's leadership in all branches of state government (e.g., executive, legislative, and agency) be credible and consistent with that of the national scientific community.

By following these criteria, we aim to assure that no child or adult in Florida suffer needlessly from a disease that is preventable through immunization.

**The Children's Forum, Inc. • The Children's Healing Institute
The Children's Trust • Florida Association of Healthy Start Coalitions
Florida Medical Association
Florida Pediatric Society • Florida Public Health Institute
The Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Coalition of Broward County
March of Dimes, Florida Chapter • The Ounce of Prevention Fund of Florida**

¹ Ten Great Public Health Achievements — United States, 1900-1999. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*. 1999;48(12):241-243.

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