

Memorandum of **SUPPORT**

S.2994 (Hoylman) /A.2371 (Dinowitz)

Repeals subdivision 9 of section 2164 of the public health law relating to exemption from vaccination due to religious beliefs

The New York State School Boards Association **supports** repealing the religious vaccination exemption.

This legislation would clarify that the only permissible exception from New York's vaccination requirements is for patient medical conditions. While NYSSBA respects the religious beliefs of the families who attend our schools, we have concerns this exemption endangers the welfare of our students and employees, especially our students with medical exemptions from vaccinations.

In order to obtain a medical exemption, there must be a health reason/condition for not immunizing a student as certified by a physician. The written exemption must be renewed annually and specify the valid medical contraindication, the vaccine(s), the length of time the vaccine(s) are medically contraindicated and, must be signed by a physician licensed to practice in New York State.

Currently, public health law allows for children to attend school without a vaccination certificate if the parent or guardians hold genuine and sincere religious beliefs. Parents and guardians seeking this exemption must submit a written and signed statement declaring their objection to their school district and may request an in-person meeting to provide further information regarding their beliefs. In this situation, a school principal makes the decision as to what constitutes a genuine and sincere religious belief.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention declared measles the eliminated in 2000. Unfortunately, there have been 695 confirmed cases of measles in 22 states, from January 1 to April 24 in 2019. Furthermore, the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene confirmed that 390 people have been infected with measles. Outside of NYC, as of April 24, 2019, there have been 232 confirmed measles cases. In twenty years a disease that had been eradicated is now present in several counties in the state and New York City, most of whom, have declared a public health emergencies.

Educating students in a healthy and safe environment is the main priority and responsibility of school districts across the state and; the growing unvaccinated population is putting student health at risk. Immunizations protect infants, children, adolescents, and adults from preventable disease and are a cornerstone of public health.

For these reasons NYSSBA **supports** the above referenced legislation. For additional information please contact NYSSBA Governmental Relations at 518-783-0200.