

To the Members of the Senate Committee on Health and Wellness:

As a representative from the Dartmouth Hitchcock Department of Dermatology, I am writing to express my strong support for the New Provision in Title 16, Chapter 31 regarding the ability of Vermont students to carry and apply sunscreen in schools. Vermont currently faces a significant challenge with skin cancer, boasting the **second highest** per capita rate in the nation. Sunscreen plays a vital role in preventing skin cancer by serving as a barrier against ultraviolet radiation (UVR) from the sun, the leading cause of skin cancer. Therefore, it is essential to encourage Vermont's youths to apply sunscreen regularly.

Currently, children are required to have a physician's prescription to carry and apply sunscreen at school. This policy poses challenges for parents in supplying sunscreen and limits students in its application. Even with a prescription, it only allows students to use the prescribed brand, rather than any sunscreen in general. Additionally, existing regulations prevent school staff from assisting with sunscreen application, particularly impacting young children and limiting reapplication during afternoon outdoor activities and play.

It's crucial to acknowledge that sunscreen and proper sun protection in childhood are fundamental for the prevention of skin cancer. Recent scientific data underscore the importance of minimizing sun exposure in childhood, as this period significantly influences the risk of all skin cancer types. Considering that a significant portion of lifetime sun exposure occurs during childhood and that children's skin is more vulnerable to UVR, prioritizing sun protection during this time is paramount. Moreover, childhood sunburns substantially elevate the likelihood of developing skin cancer later in life; in fact, a single sunburn during childhood can double a child's chances of developing skin cancer in the future. Compounding this risk, children with fair skin face an elevated risk of developing skin cancer due to sunburns, and this demographic constitutes a significant majority of our child population in Vermont.

Over 28 states have similar laws in place to permit sunscreen in schools to increase access and application. The leading pediatric dermatologists at DHMC, specifically Dr. Mann and Dr. Pace, in collaboration with Dartmouth Dermatology, stand ready to provide guidance and support for this bill. Enacting this legislation represents a proactive measure to decrease rates of skin damage and cancer statewide.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this important legislation. Together, through actions such as this, we can make a meaningful impact in safeguarding the health and well-being of Vermont residents.



Dermatology
DARTMOUTH HITCHCOCK MEDICAL CENTER

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "JKarch".

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Geisel School of Medicine at Dartmouth
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¹U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Center for Disease Control and Prevention. U.S. Cancer Statistics Working Group. U.S. Cancer Statistics Data Visualizations Tool, Based on 2022 submission data (1999-2020). Atlanta: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2023. <https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/dataviz>

²U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Center for Disease Control and Prevention. State Cancer Profiles: Vermont. Atlanta: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Last Updated February, 2024.

³Elisabeth Richard, *All About Sunscreen*, Skin Cancer Foundation, Last Updated July, 2022. Accessed at: <https://www.skincancer.org/skin-cancer-prevention/sun-protection/sunscreen/>

⁴Nationwide Children's Hospital. *Sunscreen and Sun Protection*. Columbus: Nationwide Children's Hospital, 2016. <https://www.nationwidechildrens.org/family-resources-education/health-wellness-and-safety-resources/helping-hands/sunscreen-and-sun-protection#:~:text=There%20are%20two%20types%20of,also%20contribute%20to%20skin%20cancer.>

⁵Diehl, K., Thoonen, K., Breitbart, E. W., Pfahlberg, A. B., & Görig, T. (2022). Sun Protection and Tanning Behaviors in Caregivers: Prevalence Determinants, and Associations with Children's Behaviors. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19(11), 6876.

⁶Anna Chien, Heidi Jacob., *Sunburn and Your Skin*, Skin Cancer Foundation. Last Updated May, 2023. Accessed at: <https://www.skincancer.org/riskfactors/sunburn/#:~:text=Even%20one%20blistering%20sunburn%20in,developing%20melanoma%20later%20in%20life.>