

- Thank you for holding this public hearing and for giving me the opportunity to address you as the Mayor of Vermont's largest City, and as a member of the Vermont Mayors Coalition that represents approximately 100,000 Vermonters. The Coalition previously sent Chairman Lippert a letter urging the elimination of non-medical exemptions because declining vaccination rates present a particular risk in **urban areas** where the risks of not vaccinating are magnified by a denser population.
- The Mayors were moved to act out of a sense that there is no more important role for government than to protect the health of its citizens and particularly its children who are not in position to defend their own health and safety.
- Over the course of the 20th Century, vaccines created enormous public health benefits, saving many millions of lives. The debate before you is about whether you will defend those hard-earned, life-saving advances or allow them to be seriously eroded by fear and bad science.
- It is clear that that erosion is currently well underway at great cost to child health and taxpayer spending.
- Research tracking the health outcomes of hundreds of thousands of children in Colorado, some vaccinated and others not, found that unvaccinated children "were roughly 23 times more likely to develop whooping cough, nine times more likely to be infected with chicken pox, and 6.5 times more likely to be hospitalized with pneumonia or pneumococcal disease than vaccinated children from the same communities."¹
- In addition to the increased risk for unvaccinated children, and to other children who have been vaccinated but have not developed sufficient immunity, there is a substantial financial cost borne by communities with outbreaks of these preventable diseases.

¹ <http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/straight-talk-about-vaccination/?page=2;>
<http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/123/6/1446>

- In 2011, there were 107 cases of measles associated with 16 outbreaks. Those cases cost local and state governments between \$2.7 and 5.3 million. The 2008 San Diego outbreak cost more than \$10,000 per case.²
 - I watched with interest the news from two weeks ago that an individual who had been infected with measles had traveled around Maine and New Hampshire.
 - While our greatest concern is always for the health impacts associated with disease, we cannot ignore the financial impact of a potential outbreak.
- This increased risk matters in Vermont, and in Burlington. During the 2013 – 2014 school year, about 56 percent of Vermont public and private school students attended a school with immunization rates below the 95 percent threshold considered adequate by many health care professionals to maintain herd immunity.
 - One of my daughters attends one of those schools and is having an outstanding experience in that school.³
 - It was sobering to hear the testimony yesterday of Mia Hockett, who feels unable to send her daughter Merin to that same school because she has leukemia that has compromised her immune system. Low vaccination rates put her and other children at greater risk for catching diseases from other children who were not vaccinated.⁴
 - Burlington or Vermont parents should not have to fear for their child's health when deciding whether or not to send their child to a public school.
 - This committee has an opportunity to demonstrate real leadership on this important public health issue. Thank you for your consideration and this opportunity to testify.

² Forbes Magazine, February 11, 2015

³ IAA has a pertussis immunization rate of 89.7, polio at 90 percent, and MMR at 92.3 percent in VDH data

⁴ <http://www.sevendaysvt.com/OffMessage/archives/2015/05/05/kennedy-wins-lawmakers-attention-if-not-votes>