

VERMONT



SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION

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Great Governance, Excellent Education, Strong Communities

May 11, 2015

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Members of the House Health Care Committee
Vermont Statehouse
115 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05633

Dear Members of the House Health Care Committee,
The immunization issue received considerable attention from the Vermont School Boards Association three years ago. Given that the issue was not front and center this year, and there have been a few other education priorities, we have not engaged our membership this year. However, over the past two weeks, we have received a number of calls and concerns which lead me to share some perspectives.

1. As the people who are responsible for assuring that schools are safe, healthy places for students, we have a strong investment in the widespread immunization of students. We believe that experts in the field of public health should guide Vermont's ultimate policy.
2. As you know, this is a very difficult issue. We have some communities where this is a very divisive issue. If the policy is to be changed, there must be adequate time for families to understand their options and to adjust to the new requirements.
3. The most common concerns expressed by our members are logistical, practical, and legal. They include:
 - a. Who will be responsible for enforcing the new provision?
 - b. Is there any basis for a parent of an unimmunized special ed eligible student to demand an off-site individualized program?
 - c. If a substantial number of families in a particular district decide to home-school, what are the possible tax implications?
 - d. If the law changes in July, how long does it take to actually fully immunize children? There must be time for families to make decisions and then to implement changes either to secure a different exemption or to proceed with immunizations.
4. Because of these concerns, we recommend that the new law, should it pass, be effective no earlier than July 1, 2016, to give parents, schools, and state departments adequate time to adjust policies, procedures, and practices and to adapt to the new requirements.

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Sincerely yours,



Stephen R. Dale, Executive Director

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