



January 1, 2020

Dear Legislator,

We, the undersigned organizations and individuals, jointly affirm the value, safety, and effectiveness of vaccines in preventing serious illness and saving lives. Immunization is one of the ten greatest public health achievements of the 20th century and has measurably improved the health and life expectancy of people living in the U.S.ⁱ Yet, in 2019 vaccine hesitancy was declared one of the top ten threats to global health.ⁱⁱ

Iowa has a history of strong immunization rates. This is thanks to collaboration between our county health departments and community resources, and a state ethic that values looking out for each other. Despite this, outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases have been increasing in Iowa and our surrounding states. In 2019, two northeast Iowans contracted measles, the first cases in Iowa since 2011.ⁱⁱⁱ Nationally, 2019 saw more measles cases in a single year since 1992.^{iv} This escalation of disease is occurring alongside a surge in the spread of misinformation about vaccines online, and increasing vaccine refusals, not only nationally, but in Iowa as well.

When everyone is vaccinated, we protect our most vulnerable members of society, including young children, the elderly, and the medically frail. Our schoolchildren are able to learn in the safest environment possible when our schools have strong immunization rates, and minimal nonmedical vaccine exemptions. Iowa schools currently allow vaccine exemptions for medical and religious reasons, but unfortunately religious exemptions can be misused, and such exemptions have quadrupled in Iowa over the past 15 years.

In order to protect Iowan children and vulnerable adults, and to continue 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 vaccines, access to immunization services, and missed opportunities

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for giving all vaccinations that are due at the same time.

- **Encourage adherence to evidence-based vaccine recommendations.** Recommendations for the use of vaccines in the U.S. are determined by expert national committees, including the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the American Academy of Pediatrics Committee on Infectious Diseases. The immunization schedule is supported by extensive safety and efficacy data, and protects children, adolescents, and adults before they are most at risk for these serious diseases. These science-based decisions have become the standard of care for physicians and other healthcare professionals throughout the country. Additionally, the Iowa Department of Public Health follows these recommendations as the basis for the state's school and childcare immunization requirements.
- **Support providing accurate, science-based immunization information.** In today's world, people can get immunization information from many sources other than their healthcare provider or public health agency, such as over the Internet, in newspapers and magazines, as well as from friends and other social contacts. Although this wealth of information can help the public make more informed health decisions for their families, it can also be a source of serious misinformation. It is imperative that any information on vaccines and immunization communicated by our state's government leadership be credible and consistent with the consensus of the science and health community.

By supporting public policies that adhere to these criteria, we aim to assure that no child or adult in Iowa will suffer needlessly from a disease that is preventable through immunization.

Respectfully,



Dr. Nathan Boonstra, MD
Chair of Iowa Immunizes Coalition

Endorsing Organizations:

Adams County Board of Health
Alliance for Patient Access
American Academy of Pediatrics - Iowa
Chapter
Blank Children's Hospital
Buchanan County Public Health Department
Buena Vista County Public Health and Home
Care
Cedar Valley Preschool and Childcare Center

Child and Family Policy Center
Davis County Board of Health
Davis County Council for the Prevention of
Child Abuse
Dickinson County Public Health
Des Moines University
Henry County Public Health
Iowa Association of Nurse Practitioners
Iowa Bio

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Iowa Hospital Association
Iowa Medical Society
Iowa Pharmacy Association
Iowa Primary Care Association
Iowa Public Health Association
Johnson County Public Health
Lenox Community Schools
Louisa County Board of Health
Monroe County Board of Health

Sanford Health
Siouxland District Health Dept
Taylor County Board of Health
UnityPoint Health
University of Iowa Health Care
Wapello County Public Health
Wayne County Public Health

Endorsing individuals:

Laura Beede
Bethany Bjorklund
Jeff Brock
Susan Brooks
Ginelle Bryant
Victoria Carey
Renaë Chesnut
Cheryl Clarke
Valerie Cohen
Michael Daly
Darshika Desai
Darla Eastman
Elizabeth Faber
Ali Goldensoph
Sara Goslin Neff
Kevin Grieme
Sally Haack
Marie Herring
Elena Hicks
Lynn Kassel
Carrie Koenigsfeld
Nic Lehman
Kaylin Leon
Erik Maki, PharmD, BCPS
Jack McLoone

Kimberly McMains
Kristin Meyer
Annika Meyers
Andrew Miesner, PharmD, BCPS
Jeneane Moody
Andrea Polkinghorn
Cyndy Powers
Robin Poole
Arlene Frances Prather-O’Kane
Tia Prebeck CRNA, APRN
Brandon Rohrig
John Rovers
Meghan Ryan
Chelcee Schleuger
Amy Shriver, MD
Hannah M Shultz
Erica Sloan
Liz Thompson
Lina Tucker Reinders
Taurie Uhlenhake
Gloria Vermie
Geoff Wall
Rachel Whitesitt
Craig Wrenn
Beth Zumwalt

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

ⁱⁱ “Top Ten Threats to Global Health.” *World Health Organization*. Accessed January 28, 2020. <https://www.who.int/news-room/feature-stories/ten-threats-to-global-health-in-2019>

ⁱⁱⁱ “Measles (Rubeola).” *Iowa Department of Public Health*. Accessed January 28, 2020. <https://idph.iowa.gov/CADE/disease-information/measles>

^{iv} “Measles Cases and Outbreaks.” *US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*. Accessed January 28, 2020. <https://www.cdc.gov/measles/cases-outbreaks.html>

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