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. Yet, in 2019 vaccine hesitancy was declared one of the top ten threats to global health.

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. Nationally, 2019 saw more measles cases in a single year since 1992. 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
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,

[Signature]

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 Immunizes is a coalition of individuals and organizations committed to protecting the health of Iowans through vaccinations. Iowa Immunizes is supported by Iowa Public Health Association. www.IowaPHA.org
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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:
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Bethany Bjorklund
Jeff Brock
Susan Brooks
Ginelle Bryant
Victoria Carey
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Cheryl Clarke
Valerie Cohen
Michael Daly
Darshika Desai
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