

Members of the the House Human Services Committee:

My name is Dr. David Myerowitz and I spoke before your committee on 1/26/2011 in opposition to House Bill 227 which would extend religious exemptions to vaccination to pre school day care settings. I am a retired endowed chair professor of surgery at The Ohio State University and have an extensive list of publications. I am also a member of the Flathead County Board of Health. At the request of our Health Officer, we drove 8 hours to provide our testimony before your committee. Though I understand the time constraints for such activity, I am disappointed in the lack of time allowed to present scientific justification AGAINST legislative action that would further decrease an already dismal rate of childhood vaccination in our state, especially at a time when one serious childhood disease, Pertussis (Whooping Cough), has caused at least ten deaths in California and several outbreaks in Flathead county and others in Montana.

While my heart goes out to the mothers who presented their individual children's tragic and near tragic stories, neither one presented a shred of evidence implicating vaccination. In the first instance a week or more plus an illness intervened between the child's vaccination and his fever and uncontrollable seizures, and in the second instance of supposed high titers after two of five vaccinations, the woman doesn't understand the importance of timing between the vaccinations, the rise (and fall) in immunity and the well documented need for the series of vaccinations prescribed. However, millions of doses of these vaccines have been given without problems. The reporting system for complications is robust and is connected to a federally funded payment system for vaccine related complications, both of which would encourage reporting any such complications. The long quoted article by British physician Wakefield that appeared in Lancet, a very prestigious British medical journal, was retracted last year for falsification of data. The transgression was so egregious (the doctor was earning large sums of money testifying for the "injured" children) that his medical license was revoked. THERE IS NO CREDIBLE DATA LINKING VACCINATION TO AUTISM. PERIOD.

Vaccines provide individual immunity of varying degrees (some near 100% others only 80%) but they also provide herd immunity meaning that if a large majority of individuals in a population are immune some of the younger, less completely immunized in the population are also afforded indirect protection. It is our responsibility as physicians and public health departments to provide the best, most scientifically proven care we can for people. You heard from a number of nurses, pediatric group practices and infectious disease experts urging you to vote AGAINST House Bill 227. On the side of those supporting the bill, you heard from one nurse, two chiropractors and a web site manager. The vast preponderance of legitimate testimony favors the DEFEAT of House Bill 227.

The antivaccinationist movement has existed for 200 years. Only during the middle of the 20th century, as deadly diseases like smallpox and polio were conquered, did the fears and false claims these groups espoused fade. As these diseases disappeared and folks became complacent, the movement was resurrected. Religious exemption (to my knowledge only relevant perhaps to Christian Scientists) is a sham used to support a personal philosophy based on inadequate knowledge and fear. As physicians, it is our responsibility to protect the most vulnerable among us, our children; as legislators, you have a similar responsibility. The facts are solid. Please vote AGAINST House Bill 227 and keep Montana kids safe from preventable disease.

P. David Myerowitz, MD
297 Apgar View
Columbia Falls, MT 59912
DRPDMMMD@gmail.com