

Exhibit No. 1Date 1/26/2011Bill No. SB 189

Testimony on SB 189 January 26, 2011

Good afternoon. Chairman and members of the committee: For the record, my name is Lori Morin –MORIN- and I am a member of the Montana pharmacy association board of directors and I also teach pharmacy law and practice at the school of pharmacy.

I have been a practicing pharmacist in Montana for 34 years and I am certified to give immunizations.

I speak in support of SB 189 and ask that you pass this bill out of committee. We are asking to lower the age of patients that pharmacists can administer the influenza vaccine from 18 and over to age 12 and over.

I was very involved when the law allowing pharmacist to immunize patients. Since the passing of that legislation, the pharmacists of Montana have helped others health care professionals immunize adult patients. We were very thoughtful about our choice of administered vaccines to age 18. At that time the recommendation for the influenza vaccine was our elderly population and those at high risk for complications associated with the flu. This recommendation covered people with asthma, COPD, diabetes and the like.

With the most recent “swine” flu epidemics, the age recommendation has changed with the CDC recommending that everyone over the age of 6 months be vaccinated against the flu yearly, both seasonal and “swine”. Last year, this meant each person had to get two shots, one for the seasonal flu and one for the H1N1 strain of flu. This year, manufacturers including both vaccinations in one shot, with the recommendation that everyone over 6 months be vaccinated.

The pharmacy association, state board of pharmacy and the school have been very pro-active in this public health arena. We have very good rules in place to safeguard the public. The school provides specific immunization education and in fact we certify our students as immunizers before they graduate from the professional program.

Pharmacies are very accessible. Thus far, pharmacies are reporting that they have immunized hundreds of patients and are constantly asked to immunize children. We were and still are cognizant of the fact that routine childhood immunizations are a very important part of well baby and childhood visits. Clinical Pediatrics, however, reports that adolescents rarely make preventive health visits and thus are not getting vaccinated.

Parents do not want to take their children out of school in order to get a flu shot. If the age was lowered, parents would be able to take their children to their pharmacy in the evening and on weekends and do so without an appointment.

Pharmacist-provided immunizations not only save money, but lives. In the US, 200,000 patients are hospitalized each year due to influenza or complications arising from influenza infection. Depending upon how the death was classified, somewhere around 36,000 people die from complication of an illness that is largely preventable.

Walgreens alone has over 23,000 pharmacists certified. In Montana, Target, Walgreens, and other Chain pharmacies as well as a large number of independently owned pharmacies employ pharmacists who are certified.

The increased demand for flu shots is taxing the workload of our family practice folks and the health departments across the state. We want to be a part of an ongoing effort to improve the health of Montana citizens.

Before we proposed this change to the current legislation, we did our due diligence by examining best practice in the United States. All 50 states allow their pharmacists to immunize their patients. Each state defines what parameters will be used. Some states allow pharmacists to administer all vaccines to patients of all ages. Others allow patients as young as 10 with all vaccines, and some with just influenza vaccine.

February is typically the month of highest flu activity. At the end of December, 5 states were reporting widespread flu, another 13 states with regional activity and 9 states, including Montana reported local flu activity. As of the middle of January 11 states are reporting widespread activity and 4 with High levels of flu. Sadly, four children died of flu in the first week of January, the latest week for which CDC data is available. So far, the 2010-2011 flu season has claimed the lives of eight children. There were 282 U.S. pediatric deaths during last year's flu pandemic, 133 in the 2008-2009 season, and 88 in the 2007-2008 season.

We are proposing what we feel works in Montana. Again, we want to be a part of the solution to a problem facing this state and the nation.

Thank you once again for listening to my testimony supporting SB 189. I want to urge you to vote in favor of this the bill as it is goes a long way to help the public access needed vaccinations.

Thank you very much for listening and I will stand for questions.

Lori Morin