



For Immediate Release  
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Contact: Rep. Gordon Hintz  
1-608-266-2254

## PREVENTING UNNECESSARY DISEASE OUTBREAKS

### *PROPOSAL AIMS TO ADDRESS WISCONSIN'S DECLINING VACCINATION RATE*

MADISON –Representative Gordon Hintz (D-Oshkosh) recently introduced a bill (*LRB 3169*) to address Wisconsin's declining trend for children getting vaccinated. Currently, Wisconsin is one of the few states that allow opting out of vaccinations for all three medical, religious, and personal reasons. *LRB 3169* follows most other states by eliminating the personal conviction exemption for vaccination requirements, which is responsible for more than 90% of Wisconsin's vaccination exemptions according to the Center for Disease Control (CDC) in 2015.

***"We have been victims of our own success in the United States. The success of vaccination in the 20<sup>th</sup> century has made many forget how devastating communicable diseases were before vaccines were discovered. Unfortunately, an increasing number of parents in Wisconsin are opting their children out of getting vaccinated, putting a greater number of people at risk. This is why I am proposing legislation as a proactive measure after hundreds of avoidable measles cases across the United States were reported to the CDC over the 2014-2015 school year. We can't wait until it is too late."***

A recent CDC [report](#) shows that more than 5% of parents in Wisconsin are checking the box to opt their children out of getting vaccinated, more than double the national average. Further, the CDC estimates that vaccinations will prevent more than 21 million hospitalizations and 732,000 deaths among children born in the last 20 years.

***"Vaccinations are a public health issue and not just parental right. The decision to forgo vaccination poses a threat to others, especially babies too young to be vaccinated or those who cannot be vaccinated for health reasons. Recent measles outbreaks have resulted in communities where vaccination rates were low, putting the public at risk. Vaccination is not just about protecting individuals, it is about protecting everyone. People who choose to opt-out are only protected by those who are vaccinated."***

In order to keep people healthy, vaccinations require herd immunity – where 90-95 percent of the population is vaccinated. This bill is taking a step in the right direction by reversing the increasing public health threat by eliminating the personal conviction opt-out option for vaccinations in Wisconsin.

Mississippi has the nation's highest child vaccination rates due to strict laws that require all children to be vaccinated except for proven medical reasons. Yet, Wisconsin allows parents to exempt their child from vaccines for religious or medical reasons, along with **any** personal belief. *LRB-3169*, which only addresses the personal belief exemption, will be circulated for co-sponsorship until February 2, 2016.

***“Parents should not be putting their child and all the other children around them at risk for a preventable disease simply because they can check a box and get a waiver. My bill represents a common-sense, proactive action aimed at protecting public health throughout our state. It is important to reverse the trend, encourage a better understanding of vaccinations, and avoid a completely unnecessary disease outbreak in our state.”***

The Wisconsin Medical Society already adopted the following vaccine policy in June of 2015 in favor of limiting the personal conviction waiver:

<https://www.wisconsinmedicalsociety.org/news/society-adopts-new-vaccine-policy-limiting-exemptions/>

The bill also has the support of the Wisconsin Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Wisconsin Academy of Family Physicians.

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