



## Support Assembly Bill 248 and Senate Bill 262 – Wisconsin Student Immunization Law

### LEGISLATIVE REQUEST

Please support Assembly Bill 248/Senate Bill 262 and eliminate the personal exemption immunization waiver from state law. If passed into law, the legislation should prompt an increase in the student immunization rate and therefore protect immunized students, non-immunized students and the community.

### IMPORTANCE OF IMMUNIZATIONS

The physician community supports immunizations for children, as recommended by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices. Current state law requires children attending school to be vaccinated against various diseases like measles, mumps, and polio. With often hundreds of children in close proximity to one another for large amounts of time per day, virulent diseases can rapidly spread throughout a school, especially among unimmunized students – putting children’s health and even lives at risk.

While state law requires certain immunizations, there are exceptions:

- **Medical** – when an immunization could harm a child due to other health conditions.  
All 50 states allow medical exemptions.
- **Religious** – when an immunization runs counter to a student’s or parents’ religion.  
30 states allow both medical and religious exemptions.
- **Personal Conviction** – a parent may simply check a box on a form to exempt their child.  
Just 15 states allow medical, religious, and personal conviction exemptions.

### STATE OF IMMUNIZATIONS IN WISCONSIN

Wisconsin is one of just 15 states allowing a personal conviction exception to required school immunizations.<sup>1</sup> Since the 1997-98 school year, the percentage of students requesting a medical or religious exemption has been relatively constant, while those requesting a **personal conviction exception has grown from 1.2 percent of students to 4.6 percent of students in 2018-19.**

This increase in personal conviction exceptions has led to an overall drop in the percentage of students who meet the minimum immunization requirements – the 91.9 percent figure for 2018-19 is the lowest rate in nearly 10 years and is nearing a level where “herd immunity” – the ability to slow or stop a disease’s spread because a supermajority of people are immune to the disease – could be threatened.

Wisconsin School Immunization Rates<sup>2</sup>

School Year	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Percent of students who met minimum immunization requirements	90.7%	90.8%	91.9%	92.6%	92.3%	92.5%	92.4%	92.5%	92.3%	91.9%

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.ncsl.org/research/health/school-immunization-exemption-state-laws.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/publications/p01894.pdf>

## IMMUNIZATION SCIENCE AND SAFETY

- According to the World Health Organization, outbreaks of otherwise-preventable diseases can take hold when immunization rates fall below 95%.<sup>3</sup>
- Unvaccinated children are nearly six times more likely to contract pertussis and 22-35 times more likely to contract measles.<sup>4</sup>
- The World Health Organization says immunizations are one of the most cost-effective ways of avoiding disease and prevents 2 to 3 million deaths a year.<sup>5</sup>
- Oregon, which had the highest percentage of nonmedical vaccine exemptions at 7.5% of all kindergarteners, reported a spike in measles cases in early 2019.<sup>6</sup>
- Measles cases nationwide have skyrocketed from 86 cases to over 1,200 in just four years.<sup>7</sup> This is due, in no small part, to declining measles immunization rates.<sup>8</sup>
- While some parents may fear vaccines are associated with autism, the Center for Disease Control states and an overwhelming body of evidence confirms “there is no link between vaccines and autism.”<sup>9 10</sup>
- According to Dr. Sanjay Gupta, an individual is 100 times more likely to get struck by lightning than have an allergic reaction to measles immunization.<sup>11</sup>

## LEGISLATIVE DISCUSSION POINTS

- Assembly Bill 248 and Senate Bill 262 eliminate the personal exemption waiver from state law, which emphasizes to parents and students how immunizations are a key element in protecting public health.
- As outbreaks of various diseases once thought to be eliminated continue to surge across the country, Wisconsin’s public health could be under threat.
- If immunizations rates continue to decline among school-aged children, serious diseases like the measles could take hold around the state.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.who.int/news-room/detail/29-11-2018-measles-cases-spike-globally-due-to-gaps-in-immunization-coverage>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.aafp.org/dam/AAFP/documents/advocacy/prevention/vaccines/BKG-Immunizations.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <https://edition.cnn.com/2019/03/06/health/vaccine-exemption-bills-across-us-trnd/index.html>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.aafp.org/dam/AAFP/documents/advocacy/prevention/vaccines/BKG-Immunizations.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/measles/cases-outbreaks.html>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.nih.gov/news-events/news-releases/decline-measles-immunization-causing-preventable-global-resurgence-disease>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccinesafety/concerns/autism.html>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.aafp.org/dam/AAFP/documents/advocacy/prevention/vaccines/BKG-Immunizations.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> <https://edition.cnn.com/2019/03/06/health/vaccine-exemption-bills-across-us-trnd/index.html>