

Rosalyn Singleton MD
ANTHC Immunization Program
Address: AIP-CDC, 4055 Tudor Centre Dr
Anchorage, AK 99508
907-729-3418

February 10, 2012

RE: Letter of Support, House Bill 310

As a long-time Alaska pediatrician I am writing in support of House Bill 310 to temporarily reinstate the child and adult immunization program.

For over 30 years, the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services Immunization Program had a "universal" vaccine program -- distributing all recommended childhood and adult vaccines to public and private providers in Alaska. These vaccines were supported almost entirely with 2 sources of federal funding. Vaccines for Children (VFC) Program (an entitlement program) pays for children who meet federal criteria; and Section 317 of the U.S. Public Health Service Act covered the cost for children not VFC-eligible and adult vaccines. In 2008, the federal government notified the State that the State had been "overfunded" with 317 funding compared with other states and that Centers for Disease Control would be decreasing the Section 317 funding to the State during 2010 to 2013 from \$4.3 million to \$0.7 million. Therefore, Alaska is losing \$3.5 million dollars in federal funding for critical vaccines between 2010 and 2013.


This staged funding decrease started in 2011 --

- In 2011 the State stopped providing any adult vaccine.
- In 2012, the State Immunization Program will no longer provide the following childhood vaccines to non-VFC eligible children: *influenza, pneumococcal conjugate, rotavirus, and varicella.*
- In 2013, the State Immunization Program will no longer provide any vaccines except for VFC eligible children.

Why should we be concerned?

1. When faced with the complexities of maintaining two separate vaccine supplies for VFC and non-VFC eligible children, as well as fronting the cost for expensive vaccines, many small medical practices will stop providing vaccines to their patients.
2. This decrease in provision of vaccines will result in a critical decrease in immunization coverage (proportion of vaccinated children) in children, leading to increased risk of outbreaks from diseases like measles, mumps, pertussis, chicken pox and hepatitis A. Vaccines are cost saving. Alaska cannot afford further downward trend in coverage -- in 2009 our 2 year old vaccination rate was 49th in the nation.
3. The State could be left without an adequate vaccine supply and infrastructure to allow for timely response to outbreaks of measles, mumps, hepatitis A, pertussis, if such outbreaks were to occur in Alaska.

House Bill 310 is a stop-gap measure to fill the gap left by the reduction in federal funding and reinstate the Alaska Immunization Program's ability to provide vaccine for under-insured and uninsured Alaskans currently not covered by other programs. I urge Alaskans to support this bill.

Sincerely,

Rosalyn Singleton, MD MPH



February 10, 2012

Jack C. McRae
Senior Vice President

Representative Bob Herron
State Capitol Room 411
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Re: HB 310, Temporary Child and Adult Immunization Program

Dear Representative Herron,

I am writing in support of House Bill 310, which seeks to *temporarily reinstate* the child and adult immunization program in the Department of Health and Social Services.

As one of the largest healthcare insurers in Alaska, Premera Blue Cross Blue Shield of Alaska provides comprehensive, tailored services to our members, including innovative programs focused on wellness and prevention. We agree with you that prevention is important in ensuring a healthier future for Alaskans. Our plans echo that sentiment: Premera currently covers all CDC recommended vaccinations for members under age 19 and certain vaccines for adults. This is provided without cost sharing.

We believe HB 310 and its temporary establishment of a state-funded immunization program is a good approach to the process of determining a permanent solution to the gap in federal funding for vaccinations that Alaska is experiencing. Other states have also realized a decrease in federal Vaccines for Children (VFC) and Section 317 funding and have created innovative, durable solutions to this funding gap to sustain full vaccination program financing. We look forward to working with you, the Department of Health and Social Services, in conjunction with the Alaska Health Care Commission, on developing a sustainable solution for the State that takes into account Alaska's needs and financial constraints.

In the meantime, we believe that the approach outlined in HB 310, to put in place a temporary, state-funded solution to vaccination access for children and adults in Alaska, is financially sensible and offers the state ample time to develop a carefully planned, fairly funded and permanent program.

Thank you for your time and consideration and please give either myself or Jerry Reinwand (907/586-8966), our lobbyist in Juneau, a call if you have any questions pertaining to this letter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jack C. McRae". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Jack C. McRae



MARY ANN JACOB, M.D.

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Anchorage, AK 99508

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jacobmd@mac.com

December 1, 2011

Dear Ms. Erickson,

As a pediatrician in a small, solo practice, I am writing to voice my support for the Alaska Health Care Commission's recommendation that the Alaska legislature fully fund the immunization and vaccine program.

Changes in funding will lead to small practices like my own being unable to provide vaccine for our patients. I have estimated the costs for the first year to be equivalent to hiring another full-time employee. But, even more importantly, ethically, I feel medical practices should try to provide vaccines to their pediatric patients. This is part of the "medical home" model which we are being encouraged to follow, which is associated with better outcomes for children. If patients have to go to another clinic for their vaccines, some of them will forget or "be too busy". The end result will be a less immune set of children, more susceptible to infectious diseases that should be things of the past. The recent pertussis outbreak in California (10,000 case, 10 deaths) stands as a warning for what Alaska could be facing. The treatment of these diseases is much more expensive than their prevention by vaccination. At a time when Alaska is ranked 49th in vaccination rates among the United States, we really cannot afford this short-sighted approach.

Sincerely yours,

Mary Ann Jacob, M.D., F.A.A.P.



AARP Alaska
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Anchorage, AK 99503

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February 14, 2012

The Honorable Wes Keller, Co-Chair
House Health and Social Services Committee
Alaska Capitol, Room 432
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

RE: HB 310 (Herron)—Support
*State Immunization
Program*

Dear Chair Keller:

On behalf of the members of AARP in Alaska, we encourage you and your colleagues on the House Health and Social Services Committee to support HB 310, authored by your Committee colleague Representative Bob Herron and co-sponsored by Representatives Peggy Wilson, Mia Costello, Max Gruenberg, Bryce Edgmon, and Lindsey Holmes.

In the past, Alaska and Alaskans of all ages have benefited from a comprehensive vaccination program primarily funded by the federal government. HB 310 would provide state funding to make up the shortfall on a temporary basis.

From the standpoint of older citizens, AARP recognizes that providing free vaccines for influenza, pneumonia, and Tdap to adults is a good effective public health measure.

From the standpoint of grandparents, AARP members recognize that restoring the thirteen previously covered vaccines for children is an excellent decision for our state leadership to make.

According to the Vaccine Research Group at the Mayo Clinic, 50,000 to 70,000 Americans die each year from diseases that could be prevented by vaccines.

Vaccine-preventable diseases have many costs, both economical and social. Parents who need to stay home to take care of sick children lose time from work. Preventable diseases also result in more physician visits, hospitalizations and even death. Vaccinations work. Think of the savings for Medicaid and PERS and TRS if we can restore the vaccination program and prevent costly illnesses.

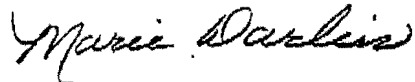
Vaccines are like seat belts. We wear them to prevent injury or death if someone decides to run a red light. We still need to have vaccines available to prevent injury or death from bacteria and viruses that exist and can still be passed on to us.

AARP requests an "AYE" vote on HB 310.

Should you have any questions about our position, please feel free to contact me (586-3637) or Patrick Luby, AARP Advocacy Director (907-762-3314).

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Marie Darlin, Coordinator
AARP Capital City Task Force
415 Willoughby Avenue, Apt. 506
Juneau, AK 99801
586-3637 (voice)
463-3580 (fax)

CC: Vice-Chair Alan Dick
Representative Bob Herron
Representative Paul Seaton
Representative Sharon Cissna
Representative Bob Miller
Representative Charisse Millett

Providence Alaska Medical Center
3200 Providence Drive
PO Box 196604
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www.providence.org/alaska



February 28, 2012

The Honorable Bob Herron
Alaska State House of Representatives
State Capitol, Room 411
Juneau, AK 99801

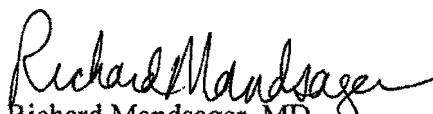
Dear Representative Herron:

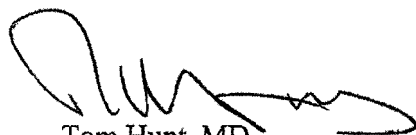
As physician leaders of Providence Health and Services, Alaska's largest health system, we write today to thank you for introducing HB 310, and offer our strong support for this legislation.

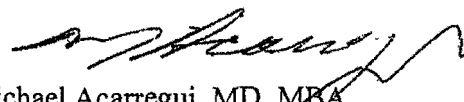
We recognize the individual and public health consequences of unchecked infectious disease and believe that HB 310, with the goal of temporarily reinstating funding through the Department of Health and Social Services for adult and child immunizations is a positive step. Providence believes it is our heritage and responsibility to advocate specifically for our state's most vulnerable population; our children.

Thank you again for introducing this legislation and thank you too for your work on behalf our public's health.

Sincerely,


Richard Mandsager, MD
CEO, Providence Alaska Medical Center


Tom Hunt, MD
Physician Chief Executive,
Providence Medical Group Alaska


Michael Acarregui, MD, MBA
Medical Director, Pediatric Subspecialty
Services, Providence Alaska Medical
Services

cc: Representative Wes Keller
Commissioner Bill Streur

Alaska State Chapter
3209 Denali Street, Suite 200
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marchofdimes.com

February 22, 2012

The Honorable Bob Herron
State Capitol, Room 411
Juneau, AK 99801

RE: Support for House Bill 310 pending in the Senate Finance Committee

Dear Representative Herron:

We are writing to you to express the support of March of Dimes for **House Bill 310**. Historically, the March of Dimes has been centrally involved in immunization issues as the organization was founded in 1938 with the mission to prevent polio.

The March of Dimes supports ongoing efforts to increase immunization rates so that children are protected from vaccine-preventable diseases to assure that such diseases of the past do not return. In our view, the nation should pursue the goals that all eligible children complete the recommended series of immunizations, and that no family face financial barriers to obtaining full immunization for their children.

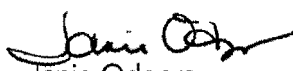
House Bill 310 intends to reinstate the immunization program as it existed and was administered by the Department of Health and Social Services in 2009 by providing additional state funding and authorization to fill the gap left by a reduction in federal funding for immunization.


Childhood immunizations are among the most cost-effective preventive health measures known:

- Every dollar invested in immunizing a child fully saves \$16.50 in medical and societal costs.
- Every dollar invested in varicella (chicken pox) vaccine saves \$4.37 in direct medical costs and other societal costs.

March of Dimes is a leading nonprofit organization for maternal, infant and child health. With chapters nationwide and its premier event, March for Babies, March of Dimes works to improve the health of women, infants and children. **We urge you bring House Bill 310 before the Senate Finance Committee for a vote and to ensure passage of this important piece of legislation.**

Sincerely,


Janie Odgers
State Director


Cherie Curry
Public Affairs Chair

march  of dimes