

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

Representative Bob Herron

Official Business



State Capitol
Juneau, Alaska
99801-1182

CS HB 310 (FIN) – State Immunization Program

“An Act temporarily reinstating the child and adult immunization program in the Department of Health and Social Services; and providing for an effective date.”

Version 27-LS1273I
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SPONSOR STATEMENT

HB 310 is a temporary measure to reinstate the Alaska Immunization Program (AIP), which supplies vaccinations to uninsured and underinsured Alaskans to effectively limit the occurrence of vaccine-preventable diseases in Alaska, to its former level of coverage. Without the protection these vaccines provide, Alaska communities are vulnerable.

For decades, Federal funding ensured the AIP could make preventative vaccines accessible to all Alaskans desiring them. But that funding has seen a sharp downturn – from \$4.3 Million in FY2010, to a mere \$700 thousand in FY2013. These reductions have cut the number of vaccines available to children, and completely discontinued offerings for adults.

Preventative vaccines control diseases such as whooping cough, lockjaw, pneumonia, meningitis, polio, and others – silently saving lives every day. Prevention, generally, is key – and by far the most cost-effective way to address health issues. If we do not prevent, we will have to treat, at far greater human and financial cost.

HB 310 makes no changes to the historically Federally funded program, and existing exemption policies for medical and religious reasons will continue.

HB 310 temporarily substitutes state funding for the decrease in federal funding to AIP, through FY2015, while we seek a more permanent solution. It preserves Alaskans' ability to choose for themselves, while providing a humane and business-smart solution to the growing problem of unnecessary disease wracking our communities.

Please join me in support of HB 310.