



February 29, 2008

The Honorable Senator Mary Ann Handley and Representative Peggy Sayers
Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106-1591

Re: SB 463: "An Act Concerning Informational Materials On Meningococcal Meningitis And Shingles"

Dear Senator Handley and Representative Sayers:

I am writing to express the support of the National Meningitis Association (NMA) for SB 463, "An Act Concerning Informational Materials On Meningococcal Meningitis And Shingles," which will be heard by the Committee on March 3, 2008. This bill, as you know, would require Connecticut's local and regional boards of education, in collaboration with the Department of Public Health, to develop informational materials on meningococcal meningitis and educate parents or guardians of secondary school students at the beginning of every school year about the disease and vaccination. NMA strongly believes that such education will save the lives of many adolescents in the great state of Connecticut, whose parents may be unaware of the dangers of meningococcal meningitis or that a vaccine is available to help prevent the disease.

NMA is a parent advocacy organization founded by parents whose children have died or live with permanent disability as a result of meningococcal disease, commonly called meningitis. Our mission is to educate parents, medical professionals and others about meningococcal disease and prevention approaches to the disease.

Meningococcal meningitis is a potentially fatal bacterial infection that can lead to death or permanent disability within hours of first symptoms. Teens and young adults are at increased risk for infection and when they contract the disease, a very high percentage – almost a quarter – will die. Another almost 20 percent lose arms or legs, live with permanent brain damage or experience hearing loss as a result of the disease.

Vaccination can prevent the majority of meningococcal disease cases among adolescents in the U.S. In June 2007, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention expanded on previous immunization recommendations to include all adolescents 11 to 18 years of age and college freshmen living in dormitories. The American Academy of Family Physicians and American Academy of Pediatrics have also issued similar recommendations for routine meningococcal immunization among these age groups.

Despite these recommendations, many teens are not vaccinated because parents are not fully educated about the disease or vaccine. Such is the case for many parents affiliated with NMA, including me and my husband. We lost our healthy, 20-year-old son Evan to meningococcal disease in 1998. At the time of Evan's illness, we were unaware of the devastating nature of meningococcal disease, or that vaccination could help protect our son. Had we known about the vaccine, Evan would have been immunized and would be alive today.

No parent should have to experience the loss of a child, especially to a disease that could potentially be prevented. I, and the other parents affiliated with NMA, urge Committee members to pass SB 463 so that Connecticut parents can make informed decisions about protecting their children against this devastating disease.

Yours Truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lynn Bozof". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lynn Bozof
Executive Director, National Meningitis Association