



Connecticut Department of Public Health

Testimony Presented Before the Public Health Committee

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House Bill #5448 - An Act Requiring Health Care Providers to be Vaccinated Against Influenza

The Department offers the following information on House Bill 5448 which would require health care providers to be vaccinated against influenza.

The Department recommends that all health care workers get vaccinated annually against influenza. Health care workers include (but are not limited to) physicians, nurses, nursing assistants, therapists, technicians, emergency medical service personnel, dental personnel, pharmacists, laboratory personnel, autopsy personnel, students and trainees, contractual staff not employed by the health-care facility, and persons (e.g., clerical, dietary, housekeeping, laundry, security, maintenance, administrative, billing, and volunteers) not directly involved in patient care but potentially exposed to infectious agents that can be transmitted to and from health care workers and patients.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), final 2013-14 flu vaccination coverage among health care workers in the U.S. was 75.2%. Coverage by occupational setting was highest for health care workers in hospitals (89.6%). Coverage by setting was lowest for those working in long term care (LTC) settings (63.0%). Vaccination of health care workers in LTC settings is extremely important because people 65 years and older are at greater risk of serious complications from the flu and flu vaccine effectiveness is generally lowest in the elderly, making vaccination of close contacts even more critical. Multiple studies have demonstrated health benefits to patients, including reduced flu-related complications and reduced risk of death, with vaccination of health care workers in LTC settings.

In Connecticut, many healthcare institutions and systems already require staff to receive the flu vaccine, unless a valid medical reason precludes vaccination. The language of this bill is unclear as to how and by whom compliance with the bill will be monitored. If the intention of this bill is for DPH to monitor compliance, the Department is unable to do so within existing resources.

Thank you for the opportunity to share this information.

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