



Connecticut Department of Public Health

Testimony Presented Before the Public Health Committee

February 25, 2019

**Commissioner Raul Pino, M.D., M.P.H.
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**Senate Bill #94 - An Act Allowing Pharmacists To Administer The Influenza Vaccine To Children
Twelve Years Of Age And Older.**

The Department of Public Health (DPH) supports Senate Bill #94, which would allow pharmacists to vaccinate children aged 12 through 17 years against influenza. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important issue.

Influenza places a substantial burden on the health of people in the United States each year. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that influenza has resulted in between 9.2 million and 35.6 million illnesses, between 140,000 and 710,000 hospitalizations and between 12,000 and 56,000 deaths annually since 2010.

The United States 2017–18 influenza season (October 1, 2017–May 19, 2018) was a high severity season with high levels of outpatient clinic and emergency department visits for influenza-like illness (ILI), high influenza-related hospitalization rates, and elevated and geographically widespread influenza activity across the country for an extended period. During the 2017-2018 flu season, 3 children in Connecticut died from flu related complications. Nationally, 177 influenza-associated pediatric deaths were reported and more than three-fourths (78%) of those children who died were unvaccinated.

Allowing a child aged 12 through 17 to be vaccinated by pharmacists will result in easier access to influenza vaccine for these age groups, thus potentially increasing coverage rates. Pharmacies are plentiful and tend to have expanded hours. Additionally, adolescents may not be regularly seeing a primary care provider. Lastly, primary care pediatric providers have a short window of time (approximately September through December) in which to vaccinate their entire patient population against influenza, and expanding access through pharmacies may ease this burden.

The Department supports Governor Lamont's efforts to expand coverage of the influenza vaccine as part of the Connecticut Vaccine Program (CVP), as stated in his budget address. Should this bill be enacted, pharmacists would have the opportunity to participate along with the more than 700 CVP providers currently offering flu vaccine to children statewide.

Allowing pharmacists to vaccinate children aged 12 through 17 years against influenza will be of most benefit to insured children. However, uninsured and underinsured children are unlikely to be vaccinated in a pharmacy setting.

Thank you for your consideration of this information.

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