

I understand that three bills are being introduced:

1. HB 7199 = The HPV (Gardasil) vaccine will be MANDATORY for boys and girls to enter 9th grade.
2. SB 858 = Kids will get the HPV vaccine without parental consent.
3. SB-94 = Pharmacists can issue a vaccine to kids 12 and over

As a public health researcher who has spent the last 22 years researching STDs and sexual risk among teens, I am sympathetic to the idea of wanting to reduce STDs, especially those with serious consequences. However, I am of the opinion that these laws would be an outrageous overstep and governmental intrusion into the rights of parents and children to make their own healthcare decisions. Vaccines are not without risks and to withhold the right to a public education to those who do not put themselves at this risk, one needs a compelling public health reason. The vaccine only protects from very few strains of HPV, which is not communicable in a classroom setting. Further, unlike measles or polio, there are other means to protect oneself from getting HPV (e.g., abstinence, condoms, partner STD testing). By letting pharmaceutical companies and others with clear conflicts of interest lobby for these laws, you weaken the argument that government should be making such decisions that impact fundamental rights like education. Not all vaccines are created equal and availability should not dictate forcing them on those who would decline.

Sincerely,  
Jessica Lewis, PhD