

Public Health Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No: SB-450 / [Bill Status](#) / [Public Hearing Testimony](#)

Title: AN ACT CONCERNING THE STANDARD OF CARE FOR IMMUNIZATION.

Vote Date: 3/18/2026

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/11/2026

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

The Public health Committee.

REASONS FOR BILL:

The federal government vaccine recommendation process is undergoing significant changes, and these changes are causing confusion and disruption in the medical community. This bill is in response to these concerns and expands the sources of information that the Department of Public Health (DPH) may consider when establishing immunizations standards in our state. In addition, the bill makes changes to state law regarding immunizations through the following:

- Allows the commissioner of DPH to establish an immunization standard of care for adults. The standard of care for children is in current law.
- Clarifies that the DPH commissioner is authorized to consider other recommended vaccine schedules not only the recommendations in the CDC Advisory Committee on Immunizations Practices (ACIP).
- Allows the DPH to procure vaccines through other means not just the CDC under certain conditions.
- Requires DPH, working with the Department of Social Services(DSS), to adopt regulations for nursing home immunization requirements for respiratory viral diseases under DPH's standard of care, instead of the CDC recommendations, as is current law.
- Regarding respiratory viral disease protection of nursing home patients through vaccination, the bill allows DPH to implement policies and procedures which do not have to go through the regulatory process while in the process of adopting such regulations. DPH must post a notice of intent to adopt these regulations within 20 days after implementation.

- If a public health emergency is declared by the governor, the DPH commissioner is authorized to issue a standing order to allow medical interventions which may include vaccines to address the emergency.
- During a medical emergency, the bill allows licensed health care providers to dispense and/or administer medical interventions. However, does not require an individual to use these interventions.
- Establishes a Vaccines for Adults Program administered by DPH that purchases and distributes vaccines to eligible free clinics as well as municipal and district health departments for underinsured and uninsured adults ages 19 and older. The Vaccines for Adults Program eligibility requirements and vaccine list are exempt from the regulatory process.
- Requires health insurance policies that cover prescription drugs to cover immunizations for children, adolescents and adults.
- Allows licensed pharmacists to administer vaccines listed in the DPH standards of care rather than only CDC recommended vaccines.
- States that Connecticut's Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) does not apply to school immunization requirements for public and private school, institutions of higher education, childcare centers, and group and family day care homes.

SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE (IF APPLICABLE):

Removes the exemption of DPH immunization standards of care from the regulatory process and clarifies that the provisions on nursing homes apply only to immunization for respiratory viral diseases. The bill makes minor changes to RFRA.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Bryan Cafferelli, Commissioner of the Department of Consumer Protection (DCP):

The DCP is responsible for registering pharmacies and pharmacists who administer vaccines. It is critical that they receive reliable guidance and regulatory support that is grounded in science. This bill will ensure continuity in vaccine standards and provide for uninterrupted access to vaccines in our state.

William Tong, CT Attorney General (AG):

Mr. Tong focused on Sec. 15 of the bill and pointed out that when the legislature phased out the religious exemption through Public Act 21-6, it never intended RFRA to reinstate the religious exemption. There have been challenges in both state and federal court regarding the constitutionality of school vaccinations. None have succeeded. SB 450 would ensure that students, including medically vulnerable students- can continue to attend safe healthy schools.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Elish Collins Main, State Representative 146th District:

Rep. Main shared her personal story of profound hearing loss due to measles and the significant impact this condition has had in her life. Rep. Main had been vaccinated with the first vaccine against measles available at the time. However, she was not vaccinated with the

updated more effective vaccine that followed. She believes her experience is why it is so important to continue to update vaccine requirements, recommendations and standards of care. She supports funding the important research necessary to continue to develop, refine and improve vaccines against a whole host of preventable viruses and diseases.

Ian Michelow, MD, Chief for Infectious Diseases at CT Children's:

Vaccines contribute to the protection of the child being vaccinated but also non-immunized individuals. Children's Hospital cares for many patients who are either too young to receive vaccines or are immunocompromised. Most of the immunocompromised children are in the public schools and may encounter children who have not been vaccinated. This is why it is critically important that our state's vaccination rate stays as high as possible to provide "herd immunity". "Herd immunity" helps ensure that immunocompromised children do not contract illness that can have debilitating consequences.

Molly Markowitz, MD, CT Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics:

Dr. Markowitz points out that SB 450 helps ensure that Connecticut's vaccine policies continue to be aligned with established medical standards of care. Currently our state maintains a high vaccination rate which protects not only the child being vaccinated but also infants and individuals with medical conditions who can not be vaccinated. It is critical that we continue to maintain and support this high coverage to prevent outbreaks and protect vulnerable populations. Dr. Markowitz pointed out that vaccination reduces burdens on families, schools and our health care system. "Every dollar spent on childhood immunizations saves an estimated \$3-\$10 in direct and indirect healthcare costs by preventing expensive treatments and hospital care".

Emily Goines, RN, Master of Public Health (MPH) Student, Yale School of Medicine:

Ms. Goines believes that what has been occurring on the federal level regarding vaccines, has made it apparent that vaccine guidance from the CDC is no longer a credible source of information. Until recently, the Advisory Council on Immunization Practices (ACIP) was composed of independent, vetted experts in vaccine policy and procedures. "Unfortunately, these experts were fired and replaced by RFK JR, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, with vaccine critics and others who lack the required qualifications". In addition to being a top contributor to misinformation, RFK Jr. circumvented the traditional process and made recommendations absent any external or internal consultation, prior public notice or public hearing. "It is apparent that these once respected and valued recommendations have shifted from being based on science to ideology".

The following submitted testimony similar to the testimony expressed above in support of this bill:

- Anthony Yoder MPH, Co-Chair of the Health and public Policy Committee of the American Colleges of Physicians.
- Carl Baum, MD, Professor of Pediatrics and Emergency Medicine, Yale School of Medicine.
- Connecticut Hospital Association (CHA).
- Azam Mirza, MD, on behalf of the Hartford County Medical Association.
- Connecticut State Medical Society.
- Caroline Simmons, Mayor, City of Stamford CT.
- Quinn Duclos, Program Director, MPH Program, University of New Haven.

- Margeret Flinter, APRN, Clinical Director, Community Health Center, INC. Middletown CT.
- Sofia Morales, MPH, Yale School of Public Health.
- Asha Shah, MD, Stamford Health.
- Maritza Bond, MPH, Director of Health, City of New Haven.
- Virginia Pitzer, Professor of Epidemiology, Yale School of Public Health.
- Deepa Joseph, President of CT Association of Directors of Health (CADH) and Maritza Bond, MPH, Advocacy Chair, CADH.
- Miriam Cohen, MD, President-elect Pediatric Primary Care Center at Bridgeport Hospital.

In addition, 21 signed testimonies were submitted by Connecticut residents from across the state in support of this legislation.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Vincent Candelora, State Representative 86th District and House Minority Leader:

Rep. Candelora is particularly concerned about Section 15 of the bill that practically “eviscerates” RFRA in our state forcing individuals to choose between their protected right to religious freedom and their right to an education. The language in this bill is an attempt to tip the scales of power in favor of the government. This bill “not only explicitly allows the government to enforce vaccine mandates on individuals despite their religious beliefs, but also does so in order to kill a pending court case that would decide whether the government’s action violated the state’s RFRA”.

Rob Sampson, State Senator, 16th District:

Sen. Sampson is most troubled by this bill as it supports a trend we have seen far too often in our state; the steady expansion of government authority over medial decisions involving individuals as well as their children that should remain between patients and their doctors. An aspect of this bill that is especially concerning is the authority given to the commissioner of DPH to establish the statewide “standard of care for immunization”, standards that could be revised at any time without going through the standard regulatory process. Such changes should be conducted through transparency, legislative oversight and public engagement.

Brian Lanque, State Representative, 45th District:

Rep. Lanque strongly opposes this legislation. It raises serious concerns impacting both religious liberty and the separations of powers in our government. This bill, if passed, would effectively prevent the ability of an individual from bringing claims in Connecticut courts regarding vaccine mandates that might be potential violations of religious freedom. Our government was built upon a system of checks and balances to ensure that the concentration of power would be balanced and not in any single branch of government or individual. Under this bill, the commissioner of DPH would have extraordinary authority to determine and modify the state’s vaccine schedule without any level of legislative review, oversight or accountability.

Erin Stewart, Former Mayor, City of New Britain:

Ms. Stewart has consistently believed that medical decisions should be between individuals, families on behalf of their children, and their healthcare providers. She believes that the state

should not have eliminated the religious exemption from our state's school vaccine requirements as passed in 2021. In her view, this bill is a troubling shift of decision-making power away from parents. Our government has an important role in advancing public health through education, access to care and transparency in communication. "However, expanding state authority to compel medical interventions-particularly for children- moves beyond encouragement and into coercion".

Christopher Healy, Executive Director, Ct Catholic Conference Public Affairs:

Mr. Healy's testimony focuses on Section 15 of the bill. He believes that this is an unprecedented restriction on the right to a free exercise of religion that subverts the role of the judiciary. Through this action, the legislative branch appears to be violating the separation of powers principle. "This bill removes the door for the General Assembly to further abridge the free exercise of religion whenever it wants to further a political policy". Any claims involving RFRA require judicial solutions, using long-established legal standard, not legislative predeterminations.

Patty Ofgang, Family Nurse Practitioner:

Ms. Ofgang has always believed that regardless of political affiliation or medical opinions, Connecticut should support informed consent, religious freedom and the ability for parents to consult with their healthcare providers to choose what medical treatments for themselves and especially their children. She also opposes the following:

- Removing the Regulations Review Committee from the process.
- Giving unilateral authority to the unelected DPH commissioner with no public oversight.
- Creating a new adult vaccine schedule for Connecticut residents.
- Removing RFRA protections for vaccines.

Karen Barber, Member, Lisbon Board of Education:

MS. Barber's testimony mirrors the comments above and rejects this bill as unconstitutional and violates the rights of the citizens of our state. This bill is discriminatory in nature and egregious government overreach.

There are an additional 75 signed testimonies submitted by residents from across the state expressing positions similar to those above in opposition to this bill.

In addition, there are approximately 2000 pieces of testimony submitted anonymously in opposition to this legislation.

Reported by: Kathleen Panazza

Date: March 20, 2026