



New York Bill Removing Religious Vaccine Exemption Turned Into Law on One Day with No Public Hearings

Statement by National Vaccine Information Center (NVIC)

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On June 13, 2019, the New York legislature quickly pushed a bill (A2371) to repeal the religious exemption to vaccination through both the Assembly and Senate in one day with no public hearings.¹ The unprecedented legislative coup, which cut the citizens of New York out of participating in the law making process, culminated in the Governor of New York Andrew Cuomo immediately signing the bill into law.^{2,3} The Assembly narrowly voted 77 to 53 to approve the bill, after passing with a margin of only one vote out of the Assembly Health Committee, and then the Senate approved the bill 36 to 26.⁴

“This new law, which was rammed through the New York legislature in one day without public participation in the democratic process, violates the human right to hold religious and spiritual beliefs that honor and protect bodily integrity,” said Barbara Loe Fisher, Co-founder and President of the National Vaccine Information Center. “When a government has to resort to forcing parents to choose between violating their religious beliefs and conscience or giving their children a school education, that government has chosen to rule by fear and coercion and will lose the respect and trust of the people.”

The bill’s sponsors, attorney Senator Brad Hoylman (D-Manhattan) and attorney Assembly Member Jeffrey Dinowitz (D-Bronx), the New York State Health Commissioner and attorney Howard Zucker, MD justified the action based on more than 800 cases of measles reported in several New York City neighborhoods since September 2018. As of June 6, 2019, there had been 1,022 cases of measles reported in the U.S. population of 328 million people with 266 cases occurring in Rockland County, New York and 588 cases in New York City since last fall.⁵ However, there have been no cases of measles reported among children attending school with religious exemptions, and the CDC has stated that 97 percent of children attending kindergarten in New York in the 2017-2018 school year had received two doses of MMR vaccine.⁶

In a special report about measles and MMR vaccine published on May 25, 2019, NVIC provided scientific evidence published in the medical literature that:⁷

- Vaccinated mothers no longer have measles maternal antibodies to transfer to their newborns to protect them in the first year of life, so infants are susceptible to measles from birth
- Fully vaccinated children and adults can get wild type measles and infect others without showing any symptoms;
- Subclinical cases of measles in vaccinated persons are not being identified or reported;
- MMR vaccine strains no longer match currently circulating wild type measles strains;
- MMR vaccine acquired immunity is waning in older children and adults;
- Many cases of measles in the U.S. and other countries are occurring in vaccinated adults with waning immunity.

“It was a very dark day in New York for families with vaccine injured children,” said Dawn Richardson, NVIC’s Director of Advocacy. “They had to witness industry backed misinformation being manipulated for the purpose of denying parents the right to obtain an exemption for sincere religious beliefs for children dependent on critical special education and therapies received at school.” She added, “The democratic process is designed to be inclusive and move slowly and deliberately

over the course of an entire legislative session but, in New York this year the democratic process was subverted, betraying those affected the most by this one day political stunt. At the end of the day, removing longstanding religious belief exemptions will not prevent measles from circulating in New York or any other state.”

About 24,000 children in New York currently attend school with a religious exemption to vaccination (0.8 percent of all students).⁸ Those children now will have to immediately get all state mandate vaccines according to the schedule published by the federal Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices or be home schooled next school year.⁹ Some families have said they will have to move out of the state because their children are already vaccine injured or have brain and immune system disorders that do not qualify for medical exemptions under narrow federal vaccine use guidelines.¹⁰

“New York has joined Mississippi, West Virginia, Maine and California as states that do not respect freedom of thought, conscience and religious beliefs, which are foundational liberties considered to be among the most important human rights,” said Loe Fisher. “This action by the government of New York will only reinvigorate the vaccine safety and informed consent movement founded in 1982 by parents of DPT vaccine injured children. Today, more Americans understand that “no exceptions” public health laws, which force use of a liability free pharmaceutical product in the name of the greater good, is a prescription for tyranny.”

On June 7, 2019, *Crain’s New York Business* reported that The Partnership for New York City, which represents more than 350 major city employers, wrote a letter to legislators calling for an end to religious exemptions to vaccinations.¹¹ Among the business group’s members and partners are Pfizer, Johnson & Johnson, Google, Inc., Microsoft Corp., Omnicon Public Relations Group, Anthem Empire Blue Cross/Blue Shield and top corporate investment and entrepreneurial firms.¹² On June 12, 2019, the *Albany Business Review* published an article about the plans of ILUM Health Solutions, a subsidiary of vaccine industry giant Merck & Co, Inc., to create 115 new jobs in the Albany area over the next five years, investing \$48 million.¹³

References:

¹ New York State Assembly. [A02371 Bill to Repeal Exemption to Vaccination for Religious Beliefs. Bill History Summary of Actions.](#) June 13, 2019.

² Office of NY Governor Mario Cuomo. [Press Release: Governor Cuomo Signs Legislation Removing Non-Medical Exemptions from School Vaccination Requirements.](#) June 13, 2019.

³ Allyn B. [New York Ends Religious Exemptions for Required Vaccines.](#) *NPR* June 13, 2019.

⁴ Precious T. [New York Ends Vaccination Exemptions Based on Religious Beliefs.](#) *Buffalo News* June 13, 2019.

⁵ CDC. [Measles Cases and Outbreaks.](#) June 10, 2019.

⁶ CDC. [Vaccination Coverage for Selected Vaccines and Exemption Rates Among Children in Kindergarten – United States, 2017-2018 School Year.](#) *MMWR* Oct. 12, 2018; 67(40): 1115-1122.

⁷ Fisher BL. [What’s Going On With Measles? The Science and Politics of Eradicating Measles.](#) *NVIC Newsletter* May 25, 2019.

⁸ Precious T. [New York Ends Vaccination Exemptions Based on Religious Beliefs.](#) *Buffalo News* June 13, 2019.

⁹ U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). [Recommended Child and Adolescent Immunization Schedule for ages 18 years or younger, United States, 2019.](#) Feb. 5, 2019.

¹⁰ CDC. [Recommendations and Guidelines of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices \(ACIP\): Contraindications and Precautions. Table 4-2. Conditions incorrectly perceived as contraindications or precautions to vaccination \(i.e., vaccines may be given under these conditions\).](#) Jan. 10, 2019.

¹¹ Deffenbach R. [City’s largest business group supports bill to end religious exemption for vaccines.](#) *Crain’s New York Business* June 7, 2019.

¹² Partnership for New York City. [Members.](#)

¹³ Young L. [This Merck subsidiary is expanding in Albany — and hiring.](#) *Albany Business Review* June 12, 2019.