

RE: Support for AB 2109 (Pan): Vaccine-Preventable Disease

I am in strong support of AB 2109 (Pan). AB 2109's goals are: to improve childhood immunization rates in California and to protect children and our communities from disease and death resulting from vaccine-preventable illness.

Specifically, AB 2109 would improve the process of obtaining a Personal Belief Exemption (PBE) to vaccine requirements for school entry, while still permitting parents the option to choose not to vaccinate their child.

California is one of only 20 states that allow use of a PBE (as opposed to medical or religious exemption), for school-entry vaccine requirements. Currently, families obtain a PBE by merely signing the back of the school's vaccine record form. The ease with which parents can obtain a PBE may lead some to take an exemption out of convenience, rather than true opposition to vaccination. It has been shown that states with lax PBE legislation is associated with significantly increased rates of exemptions and vaccine-preventable diseases.

AB 2109 would still permit parents to choose a personal belief exemption, but would require that a physician, nurse practitioner, or physician assistant to sign a form or letter stating that they informed the parent or guardian of the benefits and risks of immunization. This requirement would support informed decision-making, while still protecting parents' rights to make the final decision regarding vaccination. The health care provider who signs the form is only asked to document that they have informed the parent/guardian about the risks and benefits of vaccines--not to endorse or approve the parent/guardian's decision to leave their child unvaccinated.

AB 2109 would increase protection for our children and communities from vaccine-preventable disease, while still respecting and preserving parent choice. Thank you for your leadership on behalf of children and the health of all Californians.