

Date: April 4, 2014	BILL SUMMARY PREPARED FOR THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS	 OF NORTHERN LARIMER COUNTY
Staff: Dan Sapienza		

HB14-1288 – STUDENT IMMUNIZATIONS PRIOR TO SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

Concerning personal belief exemptions to immunization requirements for children prior to attending school

Bill Details

Bill Title:	HB14-1288 – Student Immunizations Prior To School Attendance - Concerning personal belief exemptions to immunization requirements for children prior to attending school
Bill Sponsors:	House – Pabon (D) (and 9 others) Senate – Aguilar (D) (and 3 others)
Committee:	House Health Insurance and Environment Committee Senate State, Veterans, and Military Affairs
Bill History:	03/27/2014 Introduced In Senate - Assigned to State, Veterans, & Military Affairs

Bill Summary

HB14-1288 changes the requirements for parents or guardians to exempt their child from immunizations prior to attending public schools. A student may be exempted from immunization requirements for a school if the parents submit a statement that they adhere to a religious belief opposed to immunizations. Alternatively, the parent may submit a statement that they have a personal belief opposed to immunizations, accompanied by a signed statement from a health professional (or a certificate of completion of an online module) indicating that the parent or guardian has been provided information on the benefits and risks of immunizations to the student and community.

Background

Colorado has the sixth highest rate of non-vaccinated kindergartners in public schools in the nation, according to the Centers for Disease Control.¹ Along with a continuing statewide pertussis outbreak, which is hitting school-age children hardest, this low vaccination trend is alarming to many public health officials across Colorado.² The CDC reports that pertussis vaccines, when administered correctly, are 80-90% effective.

In Colorado, there were more than 3,000 kindergartners that received exemptions from the state’s immunization requirements. Under current law, parents can exempt their child with a statement saying that the parent has a religious objection or a personal belief opposed to immunization. Many fear that this simple requirement is used too frequently because it is seen as more convenient than getting a child immunized. HB14-1288 would not modify the exemption process for religious beliefs, but would add the requirement that a personal belief exemption be accompanied by a note from a health professional or a certification form from an online learning module that explains the risks and benefits of immunizations to the student and the community.

Opponents of the legislation argue that vaccinations are an infringement on their parental rights: “Parents have a constitutional right to parent their children,” said Susan Lawson, whose daughter suffered brain damage after contracting encephalitis after a routine vaccine when she was a year old.

About this Summary

This summary was prepared by Health District of Northern Larimer County staff to assist the Health District Board of Directors in determining whether to take an official stand on various health-related issues. The Health District is a special district of the northern two-thirds of Larimer County, Colorado, supported by local property tax dollars and governed by a publicly elected five-member board. The Health District provides medical, mental health, dental, preventive and health planning services to the

¹ <http://denver.cbslocal.com/2014/03/13/child-vaccine-bill-draws-big-crowd-at-state-capitol/>

² http://www.denverpost.com/news/ci_24690359/colorado-whooping-cough-epidemic-continues-force

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communities it serves. For more information about this summary or the Health District, please contact Dan Sapienza, Policy Coordinator, at (970) 224-5209, or e-mail at dsapienza@healthdistrict.org.