

Joy Brewer

From: Illana Stern <istern1234@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, May 25, 2017 2:23 PM
To: Joy Brewer
Subject: Education Reform committee testimony

Dear Honorable Representatives,

I am writing to you today because I wanted to be given the opportunity to give my testimony which unfortunately, time did not allow for at the Education Reform hearing on House bills 4424 and 4426. I thank you in advance for reading this letter and giving it consideration.

I am the mother of a vaccine injured child. Prior to my son's adverse reactions to vaccines (specifically, dtap), I was a "pro vax" parent with very little understanding of the other side of the issue. I argued in favor for the immune compromised population. I knew that maybe some kids had reactions but I believed in the pro vax motto of "sacrificing a *few* for the greater good." I have come to learn the hard way that the segment of the population that we consider a few is growing exponentially. In fact, there are approximately 300,000-2,000,000 vaccine injured children. A parent in good conscience, with the best intention for their children can no longer vaccinate that child or their siblings once an adverse reaction has occurred. I will not play Russian roulette with my children's lives. I don't think any of you honorable representatives would either if you were in that situation.

Sadly, my child has lost his voice in this controversial and divisive issue. It feels like the majority of our community is more concerned for the immune compromised (which absolutely deserve consideration) but there is nobody to stand up for the very large segment of the population that cannot tolerate vaccines, the children who have lost their ability to meet their full potential or suffer on a daily basis with the repercussions of a vaccine gone wrong.

It is nearly impossible to obtain a medical waiver for vaccines. Because my child was injured by dtap, I can only (if the pediatrician is willing, and most are NOT) obtain a waiver for that one specific vaccine. That means I need to risk giving the other 67 doses of vaccines and risk further harming him. Yes, I can obtain a philosophical waiver. However, no health department nurse is going to ever be able to educate me on what is best for my son when he/she does not know my son's medical history, family history or the grief, strife, cognitive dissonance my family has experienced over this vaccine injury. While I am grateful for the opportunity for a waiver, it is unconstitutional for me to be forced to sign a waiver that states that I understand that by not vaccinating, I am putting my son in danger when in fact, it is quite the opposite. If I were to continue vaccinating, my son would be in far greater danger for his life than if he were to contract chickenpox. It is unconstitutional for my son to be kicked out of school for 21 days if he is healthy. Any child exhibiting symptoms of a communicable disease should be sent home. But to systemically target unvaccinated children who pose no risk is exclusionary and goes against his right to an education.

I urge you to please take a moment and realize that there are two sides to this issue. Who is standing up for the vaccine injured children who can no longer be vaccinated? Is it their fault that they were vaccinated and had adverse reactions? They deserve a voice in this debate. They deserve their right to an education. They deserve our consideration, empathy, and support as much as immune compromised children do.

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