



February 15, 2024

Dear Members of the Senate Health and Human Services Committee,

On behalf of the more than 10,000 members of the Minnesota Medical Association (MMA), I am writing in support of SF 610, to allow child care centers and family child care programs to require fully vaccinated status of all attendees older than 2 months old, unless there is a medical exemption to being vaccinated.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the proportion of U.S. kindergartners receiving state-required vaccines — for illnesses such as polio, measles, mumps, rubella, and diphtheria — declined from 95% to approximately 93% nationwide. Minnesota's kindergartners have immunization rates below the national average. According to a report from the Minnesota Department of Health from the 2022-2023 school year, only 89% of kindergarten students entering public school were fully vaccinated.

This is an extremely concerning decline.

SF 610 aims to reverse that decline. Most childhood vaccinations and boosters occur between 2 months of age and 2 years of age. By removing the non-medical exemption for child care centers and family child care programs, the rates of fully vaccinated children in our communities will increase.

The MMA would prefer that the legislature remove the personal belief exemption in Minnesota law, entirely. Minnesota law currently allows parents to express a conscientious objection to vaccines for any reason. This loophole makes Minnesota's childhood immunization laws among the weakest in the country and is the primary cause for the below-average vaccination rates in our state. For the health of our children, our communities, and our immunocompromised patients in particular, current law should be changed so exemptions are only allowed for medical contraindications.

SF 610 is a step in the right direction for the health and wellbeing of all Minnesotans. Vaccines save lives and — as has been demonstrated over and over — they are safe. Minnesota must do better. I urge members to support SF 610.

Sincerely,

Laurel Ries, MD
President, Minnesota Medical Association