

Dear Legislator:

I am writing in support of HF1197/SF1176 for the 2024 legislature.

As a concerned primary care provider for Minnesota's pediatric patients, I deeply believe that the health of our children is paramount. The more children with access to vaccines, the better it is for their individual and overall health. This belief stems from my personal conviction and understanding of the importance of both childhood vaccination and wellness visits.

This is why I believe that pharmacists in Minnesota should be able to continue to vaccinate Minnesota's youth patients from the age of 3 years and older, as they have been doing since 2020. Childhood vaccinations are crucial for preventing many life-threatening diseases and can potentially save the lives of many children. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), vaccines have reduced or eliminated many infectious diseases that once routinely killed or harmed infants, children, and adults. However, access to these vital services can be challenging in certain circumstances.

In Minnesota specifically, we face unique immunizations access challenges. Some families live in underserved areas or may have to travel a distance to find a clinic. Community pharmacies are often the closest and most convenient way to access healthcare and vaccines in particular. Community pharmacies provide improved access and convenience that meet patients needs. By allowing pharmacies in Minnesota to vaccinate children, we can increase accessibility and ensure more children receive essential - life saving - vaccinations. At the same time, pharmacists can actively help us connect families to a primary care pediatric provider by stressing the importance of well child visits with families as they come in for vaccines.

Making sure that Minnesota law provides pharmacists with the same authorities they have been practicing under since July of 2020 must be a priority this year. If the Legislature does not act this year, these authorities will go away Dec. 31st, 2024 and the public health of Minnesota will greatly suffer. Providing Minnesota pharmacists with the authority to continue the vaccination and testing services that over 5 million Minnesotans since the Pandemic have already received is crucial to protecting our public health into the future. The change will not only improve individual health but also contribute significantly to community health. As a result, enough people will be immunized to prevent the spread of a disease within a community.

Therefore, I call upon our legislators in the Minnesota State Legislature and relevant healthcare authorities to empower pharmacists, trained pharmacy technicians, and pharmacy interns across our state with the ability to administer childhood vaccinations and encourage child wellness visits to pediatric primary care providers.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Zach Merten MD'. The signature is stylized with a large 'Z' and 'M'.

Zach Merten MD (he/him/his)

Associate Program Director | University of Minnesota Methodist Hospital Family Medicine

Residency | zachary.merten@parknicollet.com | <https://med.umn.edu/familymedicine/education-training/residency/methodist> | Phone: 952.993.3400 | Fax: 952.993.3761 | **Park Nicollet Clinic & Specialty Center – St. Louis Park** | [3850 Park Nicollet Blvd. St. Louis Park, MN 55416](#) | <https://www.healthpartners.com/care/>