ISSUE BRIEF

ISSUE

Protecting Minnesotans from Infectious Disease

MMA Position

The MMA believes eligible Minnesotans should be vaccinated against COVID-19. The MMA opposes legislative efforts to impede the ability of an organization or employer to implement vaccination requirements for its members or employees. The MMA supports legislative efforts to provide funding for outreach and education of communities that have low COVID-19 and other vaccination rates. Additionally, the MMA supports legislation that repeals exemptions to vaccination requirements for children in public schools.

Background

Vaccines have long been one of our most effective treatments against the spread of infectious disease. We have known this for childhood diseases like measles and chicken pox, and for adult diseases like influenza. It has also been proven to be one of our best approaches to address the COVID-19 pandemic.

Widespread vaccination is necessary to combat COVID-19 variants, which may be more contagious or deadly to both unvaccinated and vaccinated individuals. Data shows that vaccinated individuals are far less likely to contract COVID-19 and show milder symptoms than unvaccinated individuals, if contracted. There is no scientific evidence that suggests that COVID-19 or childhood vaccines are unsafe. It's important to continue communicating the effectiveness of vaccines and combat disinformation in communities that have low rates of COVID-19 and childhood vaccinations. Unvaccinated individuals not only put their own health at risk, but also that of others who are unvaccinated, young children, those with underlying health conditions, and elderly adults. A significant percentage of people need to be vaccinated so that those who can't be vaccinated for medical reasons are protected.

This is the first legislative session in which COVID-19 vaccinations are readily available for most Minnesotans. The COVID-19 vaccine has been proven effective, yet efforts to delegitimize CDC public health guidance and minimize public trust in FDA-approved vaccinations have already taken hold in some states. Other state Legislatures have passed legislation that limits the ability of private employers and organizations to implement or enforce vaccination requirements. The MMA strongly opposes any such efforts to take similar action in Minnesota, along with any legislation to make it more difficult for Minnesotans to be vaccinated.

The MMA supports all legislative initiatives that promote vaccines and target unvaccinated populations of childhood vaccinations and supports expanding these initiatives to include COVID-19 vaccines.

Additionally, Minnesota currently has one of the weakest childhood vaccination laws because it allows for a parental exemption from childhood immunization requirements based on a personally held belief. It is time to eliminate the personally held belief exemptions for vaccine requirements.

In addition, legislation is needed to create and fund a grant program that supports community outreach and education about the importance of vaccines.

Talking Points

- The only way to assist in putting an end to the COVID-19 pandemic is to follow the CDC guidelines and get vaccinated. The MMA opposes any legislation that prohibits the state or private entities from requiring COVID-19 vaccinations.

- The MMA supports strengthening Minnesota’s childhood vaccination laws by removing exemptions that allow parents to opt out of vaccination requirements for personally held beliefs.