



Kids Matter Index Rating on S1023 “Medical Freedom”

OPPOSE This bill is not good for Idaho Children

This bill restricts the ability to require “medical interventions”, defined as any pharmacologic or biologic agent which “alters or restricts the biologic function of the body.” These excessively broad terms include vaccines, but also drugs including antibiotics, insulin, antidepressants and anti-seizure medications.

The bill prioritizes individual autonomy over life-saving, proven medical interventions, while potentially limiting the ability of employers and schools to enforce certain health and safety policies. This raises questions about balancing individual freedoms with community health protection.

The reason that employers may put requirements in place is to protect other employees, customers, volunteers, and guests in their establishment. This bill would not allow employers to do so unless required by federal law. This government overreach into private businesses is a restriction of freedom, and could have wider repercussions than originally intended.

The reason that schools have vaccine and other medical policies in place is to protect all children and staff in the school. No child is required to be vaccinated, in fact in Idaho, it is already very easy to opt out for any reason. Parental choice is already respected and honored. The school needs to know whether a child is vaccinated, as other parents of immune-compromised children need to know, so they can protect their child. **There are over one thousand Idaho children who have cancer and other diagnoses that cannot receive vaccines, and so rely on others in the community to protect them from potentially deadly vaccine-preventable diseases.**

Imagine the following scenarios:

- Schools and daycares could not require appropriate antibiotics for contagious staph skin infections or even strep throat.
- Schools or afterschool programs could not require the use of an inhaler for asthma (even with doctors' orders) or EpiPen and Benadryl for severe allergic reactions.
- Immunization rates are sure to drop, leaving children susceptible to infectious diseases, and decreasing the herd immunity, which is what is currently keeping hundreds of vulnerable children safe.

This bill puts the individual's desires or fears above good medicine and the legal and ethical requirement entities must protect their employees, customers and volunteers. Not only is it bad for children, but for the Idaho population and economy.

While individual choice is important, public health policies exist to safeguard everyone, especially the most vulnerable among us, such as children, the immunocompromised, and those who rely on the collective responsibility of others.

Stripping employers and schools of these tools not only endanger lives but also weakens the trust and cohesion necessary for a healthy society. We must carefully consider the broader consequences of prioritizing individual autonomy over the collective well-being.

Vaccines save lives.

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