

# MEDICAL SOCIETY of the STATE OF NEW YORK

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*Division of Governmental Affairs*  
**MEMORANDUM IN OPPOSITION**

**In Assembly Education Committee**

**A. 8123B (Gottfried)**

**On Senate Education Committee Agenda**

**S. 6141D (Golden)**

**AN ACT To Amend The Education Law, In Relation To Admission Of  
Certain Unvaccinated Students To Public Schools**

This bill would make it possible for unvaccinated children to attend public school districts provided their parent, parents or guardian have completed a religious beliefs vaccination exemption form. The Medical Society of the State of New York strongly opposes this measure.

This legislation would allow a parent or guardian to sign a form stating that for religious reasons that they are opposed to immunizations.

New York State already provides for two exemptions from the school based immunization requirement. These two exemptions are for health conditions and for religious reasons. The Medical Society of the State of New York only supports an exemption for health conditions. This measure would make it extremely easy for parents to sign a form saying that they have religious reasons for not vaccinating a school age child. This is similar to the “philosophical” legislation that has been cropping up across the country. This measure, if passed, could have a devastating impact on the health of children and adults throughout the state and country and could potentially lead to disease outbreaks.

Vaccines have brought a dramatic reduction of new cases of infectious diseases and their devastating effect over the last 100 years. However, vaccine preventable diseases, such as measles, mumps, and whooping cough are on the rise in New York State due to lack of immunization. Whooping cough or pertussis is a highly contagious respiratory tract infection caused by bacteria and New York State has seen significant outbreak due to lack of immunization. New York State has had recent outbreaks of measles and mumps. Vaccines are powerful medications and unlike most medicines, which treat diseases, vaccines *prevent* them. The world is shrinking due to international travel, and vaccine preventable diseases are on the rise, mainly due to lack of immunizations. Immunization is the best protection to prevent the spread of diseases.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention it is important to keep immunizing. If immunizations are taken away, and if this bill were to become law, it will take away the protection given by vaccination and more and more people will become infected and will spread disease to others. It will eliminate “herd” immunity and will undo the progress made over the

years. Immunization has been one of this country's greatest public health successes. Without immunization, there would be children who would have been disabled by measles, polio and meningitis. And, we most certainly would have children dying from these very diseases—disease that are vaccine preventable.

For all these reasons, the Medical Society of the State of New York is opposed to this measure and urges that it not be enacted into law.

Respectfully submitted,

Division of Governmental Affairs

PFC-oppose  
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