

June XX, 2019

The Honorable Kim Schrier, MD, FAAP
United States House of Representatives
1123 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Michael Burgess, MD
United States House of Representatives
2161 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Eliot Engel
United States House of Representatives
2426 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Gus Bilirakis
United States House of Representatives
2227 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kurt Schrader
United States House of Representatives
2431 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Brett Guthrie
United States House of Representatives
2434 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Schrier, Burgess, Engel, Bilirakis, Schrader and Guthrie:

On behalf of the undersigned medical and public health organizations, we would like to share our support and thank you for introducing the *Vaccine Awareness Campaign to Champion Immunization Nationally and Enhance Safety (VACCINES) Act of 2019* (H.R. 2862).

2019 has seen the highest number of confirmed measles cases in the United States since the disease was declared eliminated in 2000. As of May 24, there have been 940 individual measles cases confirmed in 26 states. The recent uptick in the number of unvaccinated children around the country is largely due to a rise in the spread of vaccine misinformation and vaccine hesitancy, which the World Health Organization (WHO) deemed one of the ten biggest threats to global health in 2019. The *VACCINES Act of 2019* is a critical step in combatting vaccine hesitancy and misinformation and ensuring that there is continued public awareness of the importance of vaccinations.

As medical and public health organizations, we strongly support the goals of your legislation, which seeks to support research to better understand vaccine hesitancy, spread public awareness of the importance of vaccinations, and increase vaccination rates across the lifespan. The bill authorizes the development of a national vaccination rate surveillance system at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and allows data collected to be used to identify communities with low vaccination utilization or where vaccine misinformation may be targeted. It authorizes research grants to better understand vaccine hesitancy, attitudes towards vaccines, and develop strategies to address nonadherence to the recommended use of vaccines.

Additionally, the bill authorizes an evidence-based public awareness campaign on the importance of vaccinations that would aim to increase vaccination rates and can be targeted at communities that have particularly low vaccination levels. Grants may be awarded to State, local, and tribal health departments to engage communities with lower than average vaccination

rates, better understand challenges to increasing vaccination rates in these communities and develop community partnerships to deliver evidence-based interventions to raise vaccination rates. In order to successfully prevent future outbreaks, these grants must be robustly funded in order to effectively engage communities with lower vaccination rates

We appreciate your commitment to ensuring high vaccination rates and we are pleased to support the *VACCINES Act of 2019*. We urge Congress to swiftly pass the *VACCINES Act of 2019* and we look forward to working with you to improve the vaccination rate across the lifespan and to prevent future outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases

Sincerely,

American Academy of Pediatrics