



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

May 7, 2019

Dear Chief Clerk Sekerak,

I wish to submit the following explanation for my vote on House Bill 3063.

As a parent and educator, I believe in supporting healthy communities. I believe those who *can* get vaccinated have an obligation to their community to do so. My children are fully vaccinated because I know it is important to public health and we are able to do so. I am vaccinated. My husband recently prepared for his trip to another continent by updating all recommended vaccines for that part of the world. We know that vaccines stop the spread of terrible diseases and save lives. That said, my vote was not an easy decision.

Over the past few months, I have heard from (and actively reached out to) health professionals and community members. While I value many aspects of the bill and the intention of the bill to preserve public health, I also believe that behaviors rooted in religious or philosophical differences are difficult, if not impossible, to legislate without robust education and a rebuilding of any eroded trust. I worry that families will not choose to change behaviors based on HB3063, and that we will therefore be excluding otherwise healthy children from our schools and activities and will effectively be removing them from our radar for their entire educational career.

As a public-school teacher, I have always seen my role as one of keeping an eye on kids who might need emotional, nutritional, social, behavioral and skilled educational supports. I have never feared a student's presence in my classroom based on their vaccination status. When we remove students whose parents have chosen not to vaccinate, we are essentially removing oversight of their childhood experience – an oversight that I also see as essential to public health.

When I learned of this bill, one of the first calls I made was to a dear friend of mine who, like me believes in sound science and supports vaccines, but unlike me has a child who is immunocompromised and is on a slower vaccine schedule. I asked her if this legislation would be a vote *for* her young son, or *against* him. We followed this legislation, and ultimately concluded that her son, despite being on an immunization schedule that works for him, would not be able to participate in the first half of his kindergarten year. There is just one of the many stories that exemplifies that there will be unintended consequences for many of our community members who are trying to make the best decisions they can for their children.

Hundreds of concerned constituents reached out to me to tell me how this bill would directly impact their family. Like me, they prefer that the individual medical decisions of when and how to vaccinate are left up to parents and physicians. We have high vaccination rates in



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House District 26 and across much of the state. The vast majority of our families are choosing to vaccinate without the state getting involved. I certainly support vaccines and robust education around the efficacy and importance of vaccinations, but I could not ultimately support this sweeping legislation with a yes vote.

Sincerely,

Rep. Courtney Neron

