

County of Santa Clara

Office of the County Executive

County Government Center, East Wing
70 West Hedding Street
San Jose, California 95110
(408) 299-5105



May 1, 2019

The Honorable Richard Pan, M.D.
California State Senate
State Capitol Building, Room 5114
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SB 276 (Pan) As Amended April 9, 2019 - SUPPORT

Dear Senator Pan:

On behalf of the County of Santa Clara, I write to express our support for your SB 276. This bill would strengthen the oversight of the medical exemption process for vaccinations by establishing a statewide model and state-level public health approval of all exemption requests for vaccines required for school entry.

Overall vaccination rates sharply increased to more than 95% statewide after California implemented your Senate Bill 277 in 2016, which abolished the personal belief exemption in California. For the 2017–18 school year, 96.7% of all kindergarten students in Santa Clara County received their required vaccinations. However, despite this success, some physicians have been able to circumvent the spirit of the law by issuing inappropriate medical exemptions when families are willing to pay, rather than reserving these exemptions for children with true medical contraindications. As a result, medical exemptions in California have more than tripled from 0.2% in 2015–16 to 0.7% in 2017–18, putting our communities at risk.

In 2018, our County experienced firsthand a measles outbreak which was made worse by false medical exemptions given to two children, directly showing why SB 276 is needed.

This year alone, as of April 29, 2019, 40 confirmed measles cases have been reported in California, of which 4 cases were in Santa Clara County. Nationally, from January 1 to April 29, 2019, at least 704 individual cases of measles have been confirmed in 22 states. This is the largest number of cases reported in the U.S. in a single year since measles was eliminated in 2000, surpassing the 667 cases reported during all of 2014,

when a measles outbreak associated with Disneyland infected at least 131 California residents, including 3 in Santa Clara County.

Without reshaping California's process to require state-level public health approval of all medical exemptions, like the provisions set forth in SB 276, we risk continuing to see the number of cases and outbreaks rise and leaving individuals who are too young to be vaccinated, or who have a medical condition that prevents them from being vaccinated, vulnerable. We also risk losing the community immunity we've built thus far and which we continue to build that keeps all our residents safe and healthy.

SB 276 is another critical step up in our state's vaccination laws to protect students and the public from being exposed to preventable communicable diseases. For this reason, the County of Santa Clara is pleased to support your SB 276.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'J. Smith', is written over a faint, light blue circular stamp or watermark.

Jeffrey V. Smith, M.D., J.D.
County Executive

cc: Santa Clara County Legislative Delegation
Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors
Michael Rattigan, Legislative Representative