



STAND FOR
HEALTH FREEDOM

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Pending Governor's Action, West Virginia Bill Would Allow Vaccine Choice for Select Students, More Closely Align WV with 45 Other States

Charleston, W.Va. – March 13, 2024 –A bill seeking to exempt virtual public school students in West Virginia from vaccine mandates and allowing private/parochial schools to set their own policies has successfully navigated both chambers and currently awaits the Governor's signature. [HB 5105](#) as [passed by the House of Delegates](#) in a 70-29 vote, originally featured an amendment introducing a religious exemption for all public and private school students. This amendment was removed during the Senate Health Committee's deliberations and a simplified version of the bill secured [Senate approval](#) with a vote of 20 to 12 on Saturday, March 8.

West Virginia is the only red state and one of only five states that does not honor the First Amendment right to the free exercise of religion when it comes to vaccination requirements for school attendance. Forty-five other states offer religious and/or philosophical exemptions to vaccine mandates and 44 states allow physicians to exempt children for medical reasons. West Virginia does not allow a child's physician, who is familiar with their medical and family history, to determine if there is a contraindication to vaccination. Instead, doctors must request a medical exemption for their patients through a State Immunization Officer. Presently, only 0.1% of primary and secondary students in West Virginia possess a medical exemption. West Virginia sits at the bottom of all states in its vaccine exemption rate; only New York has a comparably low rate. Despite having the most stringent vaccine laws in the nation, West Virginia health statistics for children are among the worst.

“Modern medicine has moved away from a one-size-fits-all approach to the care of patients. In a 2001 report, the Institute of Medicine recommended individualized, patient-centered treatment of patients to improve healthcare quality for the 21st century.” said Dr. Alvin Moss. “Considered from a public health ethics perspective, coercion (which vaccine mandates are) should be a last resort. Use of coercion causes loss of public trust.” Moss is a member of West Virginians for Health Freedom (WVHF), a non-profit organization of 3,000 families dedicated to educating families about the West Virginia vaccine laws and helping vaccine injured families to find resources and support.

"Our organization has experienced remarkable growth in the past three years," states Dr. Chanda Adkins, West Virginians for Health Freedom Board President. "Our commitment extends beyond educating communities and assisting West Virginians in navigating school entry vaccine requirements. We are actively engaged in supporting and connecting healthcare workers, employees, and community members impacted by both vaccine adverse events and mandates. Our focus remains on addressing needs within our community and filling gaps when possible."

On a national level, Stand for Health Freedom (SHF), a 501(c)(4) nonprofit organization and grassroots movement of 700,000 individuals, advocates for legislation to promote informed consent, parental rights, religious freedom, freedom of speech, and privacy. According to SHF, there is no reason to believe that allowing exemptions to vaccine mandates will adversely affect the health of West Virginia children. In the three states directly surrounding West Virginia (Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Kentucky) the vaccine exemption rates are 3.8%, 3.8%, and 1.7%, respectively. These exemption rates include religious and medical exemptions as well as personal belief exemptions in Pennsylvania and Ohio. These states consistently show better health outcomes for children than West Virginia. SHF has an estimated reach of 1 million advocates and is recognized as an important and influential voting bloc. They support the advancement of health freedom legislation in West Virginia and all other states.

If HB 5105 is neither signed nor vetoed by Governor Justice, it will become law after 10 business days.

To learn more about West Virginians for Health Freedom or to sign up for their newsletter, go to www.wvforhealthfreedom.com. To learn more about Stand for Health Freedom, go to www.standforhealthfreedom.com.
