



February 12, 2020

The Honorable Steven Haugaard
Speaker of the House
South Dakota Legislature
500 East Capitol Avenue
Pierre, SD 57501

The Honorable Jamie Smith
Minority Leader
South Dakota Legislature
500 East Capitol Avenue
Pierre, SD 57501

Dear Members of the South Dakota House of Representatives,

On behalf of the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP), which represents 134,600 family physicians and medical students across the country, and our state chapter, the South Dakota Academy of Family Physicians (SDAFP), which represents 592 family physicians and medical students in South Dakota, we write in strong opposition to [H.B. 1235](#). This legislation not only violates the physician-patient relationship, it puts the health and safety of South Dakotans at risk.

Regrettably, we've seen far too often the effects of efforts to loosen strong vaccine requirements in recent years. In 2019, 1,282 individual cases of measles were confirmed in 31 states, the greatest number of cases reported in the U.S. since 1992.¹ The majority of these cases were among people who were not vaccinated against measles. After such outbreak, it's incomprehensible that the South Dakota legislature would try to weaken immunizations laws and increase the risk of disease transmission.

This legislation is unprecedented. While some states have allowed for limited philosophical and religious exemptions to vaccines mandates, no state has passed legislation to shift all vaccine requirements to recommendations. The consequences to the health of our children – our society's most vulnerable – and to the health of the public at large cannot be understated.

Most importantly, family physicians are individual doctors for all people of all ages and health conditions. They have a responsibility to provide clinical recommendations to help their patients make the best decisions about their care – including discussing immunizations with vaccine hesitant patients – and should not face criminal charges for doing so.

Instead of pursuing policies that would increase the risk of transmission of disease and spread misinformation about the effectiveness of vaccines, as this bill would do, policymakers should be redoubling efforts to educate patients and families on the importance of vaccines in order to increase the rate of vaccination among all populations.

Advancing this legislation would be a step backwards in our efforts to advance public health, and I urge you to oppose H.B. 1235. If you have questions or would like additional information,

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/measles/cases-outbreaks.html>

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Speaker Hugaard and Minority Leader Smith
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please contact Stephanie Quinn, Director of Government Relations of the AAFP, at squinn@aafp.org, Sarah Reiffenberger, MD, President of the SDAFP, at sarah.reiffenberger@brownclinic.org, or Lisa Brown, MD, Immediate Past President of the SDAFP, at lbrosinbrown@mac.com.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John S. Cullen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

John S. Cullen, MD, FAAFP
Board Chair