



**Senate Health and Human Services
Texas Medical Association and Texas Pediatric Society
Testimony on Senate Bill 63 by Sen. Jane Nelson
Feb. 26, 2013**

Good afternoon, Chair Nelson and the members of the committee. The Texas Medical Association, the Texas Pediatric Society, and the Texas Academy of Family Physicians, representing more than 47,000 physicians and medical students, submit our strong support of Senate Bill 63. We are grateful for Senator Nelson's leadership on preventable disease issues.

I am Celia Neavel, MD, FSAHM, a physician practicing here in Austin at People's Community Clinic, where I serve as the director of the Center for Adolescent Health. People's Community Clinic was one of the first freestanding community-based clinics in Austin, serving uninsured people in Austin since the 1970s. We also have a model dedicated teen prenatal care program. I am board certified in family practice and adolescent medicine and clinical faculty with the pediatric residency program here at UT Southwestern Austin Pediatrics program.

I started the Center for Adolescent Health 20 years ago. Since then, I have cared for hundreds and hundreds of adolescent patients who have become teen parents. They all want to do everything they can to ensure their own baby's health, including getting their babies immunized. Ironically, these young parents can sign for the vaccines of their children, but not their own vaccines that would help prevent disease transmission to their children.

Most adolescents and adults can recover from a case of pertussis, their young babies sometimes cannot. Several Texas babies died in 2012 from pertussis because the people caring for these infants were not properly vaccinated. We need to do everything we can to make sure that everyone around babies, including their own parents do not pass on influenza or pertussis or other vaccine-preventable diseases.

This year another 50,000 adolescents under the age of 18 will become parents in Texas. They need vaccinations to protect their babies. However, it is not easy if the minor parents are not legally emancipated, which most are not. They may still live with their own parent or guardian and this person may not be present at the adolescent's medical visit after they have their own children. We want to help these young parents get properly immunized so they can protect themselves and their babies.

Just three weeks ago, I saw a teenager for her postpartum and well child exam. She came to the appointment with her baby. Her own mother, who is her legal guardian, was at work and not planning to attend the visit now that her daughter had her own baby to care for. We could not vaccinate the teen that day. She would have to return with her mother another time if possible, if

the mother could take off work and it might never happen. It was a wasted opportunity. Of course, this same teen signs consents for her own baby's vaccines and has a good understanding of their importance. The case would be the same if the young father came to the appointment and had not had pertussis or flu vaccination. We would not be able to protect the baby by vaccinating him. I find it too bad that the Texas law does allow teens 16 and older to consent to their own medical care if they are living apart from their family and managing their own affairs, but does not let the teen sign for important vaccines if she often wisely decides to stay at home. Please help these young parents get properly immunized so that they can protect themselves and their babies.

We believe SB 63 addresses an important barrier to vaccination, especially during the already scheduled medical visits of pregnancy or the postpartum exam six weeks after the delivery. This legislation will help Texas reduce the preventable illnesses babies in Texas face when their own young parents are not properly immunized. Thank you for your support and I am happy to answer any questions.