



**House Public Health Committee
Testimony on Senate Bill 63
Presented by: Jason Terk, MD
April 24, 2013**

Good afternoon, Madame Chair and the members of the committee. My name is Jason V. Terk, MD, FAAP. I am a pediatrician in private practice in Keller, Texas. I serve as the Legislative Committee Chair for the Texas Pediatric Society and as the chair of Texas Medical Association's Council on Science and Public Health. TMA, TPS, and the Texas Academy of Family Physicians represent more than 47,000 physicians and medical students. Together we submit our support of Senate Bill 63.

All parents want to do everything they can to ensure their own baby's health, including getting their babies immunized. Parents who are under age 18 can consent for the vaccines of their children. But they cannot consent to their own vaccines.

Several Texas babies died in 2012 from pertussis because the people caring for them were not vaccinated. We need to do everything we can to ensure everyone around babies, including their own parents, do not spread 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. But this is not easy for minor parents who are not legally emancipated — which most are not; many still live with their own parents or guardian.

When we see teen parents in our office, they are likely coming in for an appointment with their infant, for whom they are responsible. We want to help these young parents get properly immunized so they can protect themselves and their babies. However, in most cases these teens don't attend appointments with their parents, and we cannot vaccinate them without their parents' consent. I find it too bad that Texas law allows emancipated teens 16 and older to consent to their own medical care but not teen parents who often wisely choose to stay at home. Please help these young parents get immunized so they can protect themselves and their babies.

Opponents of this legislation may raise concerns about parental rights. But these teens are now parents — and they too should have the right to do what is in the best interest of their child.

We believe SB 63 eliminates a significant barrier to vaccination, especially during the scheduled medical visits of pregnancy and postpartum exam. We worked with members of the Texas Catholic Conference to be sure this bill is aimed at allowing parents to get immunized against diseases they could spread to their baby. This legislation would help Texas reduce the preventable illnesses babies face when their own young parents are not properly immunized. Thank you for your support. I am happy to answer any questions.