



**House Public Health Committee
Testimony on Senate Bill 64
Presented by: Jason Terk, MD
April 24, 2013**

Good afternoon, Madame Chair and members. 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 (TPS) and as the chair of the Texas Medical Association's (TMA's) Council on Science and Public Health. It is a pleasure to be here today representing more than 47,000 members of TMA, TPS, and the Texas Academy of Family Physicians in support of Senate Bill 64.

We believe requiring licensed child care facilities to create a vaccination policy for their employees is critical to protecting Texas' children from dangerous and preventable diseases. We have greatly appreciated the opportunity to work with the Texas Licensed Child Care Association on this important topic and are pleased it also supports this legislation.

The nearly 50,000 child care workers employed in Texas¹ are in close contact with our children on a daily basis. Like health care workers, these adults experience high exposure to bacteria and viruses. At the same time, unvaccinated child care workers pose a risk to the children in their care.

Young children are particularly vulnerable to disease and experience higher rates of severe illness, hospitalization, and death from certain diseases. Each year, flu-related complications cause some 20,000 hospitalizations for children less than 5 years old.² Pertussis is on the rise in many states, and in Texas, the Department of State Health Services estimated nearly 1,990 cases of pertussis in 2012, up from 961 cases in 2011.³

Consider these factors:

- **Children in child care facilities are at an increased risk for exposure to disease.** In addition to being in close contact with other children and employees, children share toys and other objects that may carry harmful germs. They practice less stringent infection control techniques, including hand washing and cough etiquette, so germs are spread easily in these environments.
- **Because children are often underimmunized, they are more susceptible to disease.** Approximately 90 percent of Texas children have received some immunizations; however, many are not fully immunized, and only about 75 percent have received the standard series of immunizations by age 19-35 months.⁴ This means younger children are at a higher risk of contracting diseases from each other, and from adults.

- **Children are at risk for more severe disease.** With less-developed immune systems, children are more likely to develop more severe symptoms from vaccine-preventable disease. The risk is particularly high in infants under 6 months of age, because they are too young to be fully vaccinated against serious diseases like the flu.

Vaccines are one of our most cost-effective public health interventions. A Tdap or flu shot is far less expensive than a trip to the doctor, medication, a hospital stay, or the wages that are foregone as a result of missing work due to illness. For those who might be concerned about the unintended economic consequences of this bill, I will point out that most vaccines are available at no cost or low cost to those unable to afford them.

SB 64 does not dictate what must be included in the policy for each facility, only that a policy exists. We want to be sure each facility has the freedom to make the decision on how best to balance the safety and health of its employees and the children in their care with the cost associated with certain vaccinations.

In addition to raising awareness of the need for vaccination among adults with close contact with children, SB 64 is a step toward improving accountability and strengthening our public health system. This change will provide parents essential information to help them assess risks for their children and make informed decisions on how best to protect them. We believe this is a balanced and fair approach that does not encroach on anyone's personal liberty but rather encourages the best protection of children. We ask that you support this important legislation. Thank you for your time today.

¹ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Texas Occupational Employment and Wages, May 2010. Accessed online at www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_TX.htm#39-0000. Estimates do not include self-employed workers.

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, January 2013. Accessed online at www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/children.htm.

³ Texas Department of State Health Services, January 2012. Accessed online at www.dshs.state.tx.us/IDCU/disease/pertussis/Pertussis-Update-2012.do.c

⁴ CDC. National, state, and local area vaccination coverage among children aged 19-35 months — United States, 2011. *MMWR Weekly*. 61(35); 689-96.