



Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
Testimony by Charles Stern, MD
on House Bill 1586 by Rep. Lacey Hull
May 21, 2025

Hello, I'm Dr. Charlie Stern, a family medicine physician from Waco, representing the Texas Medical Association (TMA) and Texas Pediatric Society (TPS). Thank you for the opportunity to testify in respectful opposition to House Bill 1586.

In the pre-vaccine era, 40% of childhood deaths were related to infectious diseases, most of which are preventable today. In 1984, I took care of four children ages 6 months to 18 months who died of H. flu meningitis or sepsis. Consoling those parents and witnessing those children dying still lives with me today.

Vaccines were formulated and administered in response to this blight and led to a 99% reduction in illness and mortality rates from many of these infectious diseases.

The current measles outbreak in Texas has already cost almost \$8 million, led to over 90 hospitalizations, forced school closures (in addition to those related to influenza) and led to the tragic deaths of two precious unvaccinated children. Many physicians are concerned that this outbreak may only be the beginning of a series of disease resurgences.

My concern about this bill is that it is viewed as being about the convenience of printing an affidavit form and about saving money. While that seems benign on the surface, the data shows the easier the exemption process is in other states, the higher their vaccine exemption rates. Forty states have increasing vaccine exemption rates. This leads to decreased vaccination rates, rates falling below thresholds that put communities at risk for outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases. More people getting sick increases medical and socioeconomic costs as well.

The number of Texas vaccine exemption affidavits issued has steadily increased. So has our state's rate of vaccine exemptions over the past few years under the current system.

Also, as exemption rates increase, parents of immunocompromised children should have the right to know whether their children are going to a school where the exemption rate might put their child at risk.

As physicians, we recommend keeping children up to date on their vaccines to protect the child, family members, fellow students, and communities. The national trends of decreasing childhood vaccination are putting our public health at risk.

Thank you for your time.