

July 11, 2007

The Hon. Richard T. Moore, Chair
Senate Committee on Health Care Financing
State House, Rm. 311
Boston, MA 02133

The Hon. Patricia A. Walrath, Chair
House Committee on Health Care Financing
State House, Rm. 236
Boston, MA 02133

Re: S.102, “An Act Requiring Immunization of Children Against Human Papillomavirus”

Dear Chairman Moore and Chairwoman Walrath:

In my capacity as Chairwoman of the Massachusetts Special Commission on Cervical Cancer, I strongly support S.102, “An Act Requiring Immunization of Children Against Human Papillomavirus,” and kindly request that the Committee report this legislation favorably.

The Federal Drug Administration’s approval of Gardasil, the world’s first vaccine aimed at preventing certain strains of Human Papillomavirus (HPV), was an exciting event not only for the medical community, but also for women and families across the nation. In S.102, we have an opportunity to help hundreds of women in Massachusetts.

This legislation will require immunization against HPV as a condition for entrance to the sixth grade for girls in the Commonwealth. Detractors of this measure believe that immunization against a sexually transmitted virus will give young people license to engage in promiscuous behavior, and that we should not address issues of sexuality with children. These claims are utterly baseless. The assertion that we should avoid administration of a potentially life-saving vaccine because children will somehow come to believe that they are invincible is inherently flawed. The Commonwealth requires

immunization against measles, mumps and rubella; tetanus; and certain forms of hepatitis for children entering various grades. These shots have become routine for children, and as such, children give them little consideration. To assume that because a child has been immunized against tetanus, she is more willing to step on glass, is absurd. Likewise, this preventative measure will not change a child's thinking around risky sexual behaviors.

Others believe that mandatory immunization takes away a parent's right to determine what constitutes appropriate medical care for their child. While parental rights are a primary concern, this is an issue of public safety. We owe it to our children to ensure their health and well being by preventing this treatable, yet deadly disease from spreading. Much of the public outcry we have heard relative to this vaccine has more to do with the stigma associated with the transmission of the disease than anything else. I cannot help but think that public support would be stronger if the issue at hand were lung or brain cancer.

Thank you in advance for your kind consideration of this request. As always, should you have questions or require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact my office.

Very truly yours,

Gale D. Candaras
State Senator