AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION HOUSE OF DELEGATES

Resolution: 416 (A-19)

Introduced by: Oklahoma

Subject: Non-Medical Exemptions from Immunizations

Referred to: Reference Committee D (Diana Ramos, MD, Chair)

Whereas, Non-medical exemptions from immunizations endanger the health of unvaccinated individuals, medically exempt patients, and the health of those in his or her group and the community at large; and

Whereas, Vaccinations are critical to protect the health and welfare of Oklahomans; and

Whereas, The Oklahoma State Medical Association supports all efforts to increase vaccination of Oklahoma children; and

Whereas, Oklahoma State Medical Association endorses requiring day care centers and homes to use the recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices as the rules and regulations governing the specific number of vaccine doses required and frequency of their administration to attend day care; and

Whereas, AMA public health policy encourages state medical associations to seek removal of non-medical exemption in statutes requiring mandatory immunizations, including for childcare and school attendance and encourages physicians to grant vaccine exemption requests only when medical contraindications are present (AMA Policy H-440.970); and

Whereas, All states require immunizations for children to attend school. Forty-seven states, all but California, Mississippi, and West Virginia, allow parents to opt out of immunizations if they have religious beliefs against immunizations; and

Whereas, Oklahoma is one of 18 states that allow parents to opt out of vaccines if they have a personal, moral or philosophical belief against immunizations; and

Whereas, In 2016 American Academy of Pediatrics took a stance that personal and religious exemptions should end; and

Whereas, According to the World Health Organization, there has been a 30% increase in measles worldwide in 2017; and

Whereas, The World Health Organization issued a report in January 2019 that said “vaccine hesitancy” has become a global health threat; and

Whereas, In 2019 a measles outbreak has prompted a public health emergency in Washington State; therefore be it
RESOLVED, That our American Medical Association actively advocate for federal legislation that incentivizes states to eliminate non-medical exemptions to mandated pediatric immunizations. (Directive to Take Action)

Fiscal Note: Not yet determined

Received: 04/15/19

RELEVANT AMA POLICY

Nonmedical Exemptions from Immunizations H-440.970

Our American Medical Association believes that nonmedical (religious, philosophic, or personal belief) exemptions from immunizations endanger the health of the unvaccinated individual and the health of those in his or her group and the community at large. Therefore, our AMA (1) supports the immunization recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) for all individuals without medical contraindications; (2) supports legislation eliminating nonmedical exemptions from immunization; (3) encourages state medical associations to seek removal of nonmedical exemptions in statutes requiring mandatory immunizations, including for childcare and school attendance; (4) encourages physicians to grant vaccine exemption requests only when medical contraindications are present; (5) encourages state and local medical associations to work with public health officials to develop contingency plans for controlling outbreaks in medically-exempt populations and to intensify efforts to achieve high immunization rates in communities where nonmedical exemptions are common; and (6) recommends that states have in place: (a) an established mechanism, which includes the involvement of qualified public health physicians, of determining which vaccines will be mandatory for admission to school and other identified public venues (based upon the recommendations of the ACIP); and (b) policies that permit immunization exemptions for medical reasons only.