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November 17, 2015

The Honorable Jason Lewis
Senate Chair, Joint Committee on Public Health
State House, Room 511B
Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable Kate Hogan
House Chair, Joint Committee on Public Health
State House, Room 130
Boston, MA 02133

Re: H. 2051 and S1128, An Act Increasing Access to Immunizations

Dear Chairwoman Hogan and Chairman Lewis:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of House bill 2051 filed by Representative Sanchez and Senate bill 1128 filed by Senator Sonia Chang-Diaz. My name is Leslie Vensel; I am a primary care physician and have been practicing medicine for 30 years. I am excited to be here to talk about the very important subject of immunizations.

We need to do everything we can to break down barriers to immunizations. In our lifetimes we have seen resurgence in vaccine preventable diseases such as measles and mumps. If we don't take action, our country may follow others and see outbreaks of horrible diseases like polio. Immunization against less dramatic, but still deadly, illness such as influenza is important for each of my patients. And, it's important for all of us in the Commonwealth because when enough people are immunized we reach what's called 'herd immunity' so even the few who aren't immunized are protected.

This bill would allow medical assistants to administer vaccines. Massachusetts is one of only three states in the US that doesn't allow this.

You may know what a medical assistant is, but some of you may not. Medical assistants complete a 1.5 to 2 year certificate program with a specific and focused training on administering immunizations. MAs function as an important member of the health care team; working with your doctor to get a patient ready to be evaluated, obtain vital signs, arrange follow-up and manage paperwork. Giving immunizations is about the most fun thing they do. It is what is called 'the top' of their license.

Workflow is severely hampered if only doctors or nurses can give shots in the office. Nurses are highly trained and able to do in-depth patient teaching, triage and care

coordination. These roles are critical to good patient care and a medical assistant can't do them. In my practice, and many, if you need an immunization you sit and wait until the nurse gets done with the higher-level work and can turn attention to you. Giving immunizations is NOT at the top of the nursing license.

Massachusetts has always been a national leader in medicine. The Ether Dome- down the street-is the birthplace of anesthesia. Our medical schools are world-renowned. Today Massachusetts is at the forefront of biotechnology. These bills would enable Massachusetts to stay at the head of the pack in another revolution: the nationwide movement to team based patient centered medical care.

Sincerely,
Leslie Vensel, MD