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## La Lawmakers Weigh-in on Proposal to Add COVID-19 Vaccines to List of Required Immunizations for School

**December 6, 2021** - At today's oversight hearing of the Health and Welfare committee of the state Legislature, leaders heard testimony from lawmakers, agency officials, and Louisiana citizens both for and against a proposal to add vaccinations for COVID-19 to the list of immunizations required for entry into K-12 schools and child care facilities. The proposal, which comes from Governor John Bel Edwards, mandates only FDA-approved vaccines and is, therefore, only required of children 16 years of age and older.

This mandate has received heavy opposition from lawmakers, especially Senator Cameron Henry, who testified at today's meeting, expressing, "This mandate leaves Louisiana in an embarrassing state. Taking the authority to decide on a child's health away from the parents is not a requirement that LDH can make." House Speaker Clay Schexnayder, who also testified in opposition of the mandate, echoed these feelings saying, "Today's committee meeting is important because we are talking about a parent's right to make health decisions for their children moving forward, and I think LDH has overstepped their boundaries with this mandate." Further addressing an "overreach" of the government's authority over citizens, State Senator Kirk Talbot of District 10 who also attended the meeting said, "I have had an outpouring of emails and phone calls from constituents who oppose this mandate, and I would ask the public to continue to contact their legislators and tell us how they feel so that we can fully address their concerns."

It is important to note that the mandate does come with an opt-out provision, which allows parents to opt their child out of receiving the COVID-19 vaccine with a signature, much like other required immunizations. If a parent does not wish to get the

COVID-19 vaccine for their child for any reason, they can initiate an opt-out paperwork request, which can be submitted with or without the signature of a licensed medical professional. Representative Dustin Miller talks about this provision saying, “This is not a mandate; there are three options here to opt-out. All they are asking is that parents make a conscious decision on if they want their child vaccinated for school or not. There is a religious exemption, a medical provider exemption, and just a parent exemption.” That being said, parents will control whether or not their child gets this vaccine. For those who adamantly reject the COVID-19 vaccine, their child can still attend school with the proper paperwork.

The Health and Welfare Committee voted 13-2 against the mandate of adding COVID-19 vaccines to the immunization schedule for K-12 schools. However, if the Governor supersedes the Legislature, the rule will be adopted.

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See comments from members expressed below:



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