

To: Rhode Island Senate

From: Susan Duffy, MD, MPH, Professor, Emergency Medicine and Pediatrics, Alpert Medical School Brown University, Board of Directors RI American Academy of Pediatrics

Date: February 26, 2026

Re: Support for Senate Bill 2568



BROWN
Alpert Medical School

The Honorable Members of the Rhode Island General Assembly
State House
Providence, Rhode Island

Re: Support for Senate Bill 2568

Dear Members of the Rhode Island Senate,

I am writing to express my strong support for **Senate Bill 2568**, which would require the Rhode Island Department of Health to rely on evidence-based recommendations—such as those published by the American Academy of Pediatrics and supported by other leading national medical organizations, including the American Medical Association—when establishing policies that affect the health of children in our state.

As a pediatric emergency physician with more than 30 years of experience, I have witnessed firsthand the profound impact that vaccines and other evidence-based pediatric policies have had on the health and safety of children. When I began my medical training, vaccines we now take for granted—such as those protecting against *Haemophilus influenzae* type b (Hib) and pneumococcal disease—were not widely available. In those years, I routinely cared for children suffering from life-threatening infections such as meningitis and epiglottitis. I have stood beside families in the emergency department as their children fought for their lives against diseases that are now, thankfully, rare.

Today, when I evaluate a vaccinated child with fever or infectious symptoms, I can be reassured that the likelihood of a devastating bacterial infection is far lower. That confidence is grounded in decades of rigorous scientific research and national expert consensus. It is precisely this kind of settled science that Senate Bill 2568 seeks to protect.

Vaccination is not only an individual safeguard; it is a community responsibility. When a high percentage of the population is immunized, we achieve herd immunity, reducing the spread of

disease and protecting those who cannot be vaccinated due to age or medical conditions. These children depend on the rest of us for protection. Policies grounded in the best available scientific evidence are essential to maintaining this protective shield.

Vaccines are among the greatest public health achievements in American history. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, over the past 30 years vaccines have prevented an estimated 32 million hospitalizations, 1.13 million deaths, and saved \$2.7 trillion in the United States. Diseases such as polio, measles, and bacterial meningitis—once common and often deadly—are now rarely seen by physicians beginning their careers.

Yet this progress is not guaranteed. Here in Rhode Island, earlier this year RI reported our first case of measles in more than a decade—a sobering reminder that vaccine-preventable diseases can and do return when public health protections weaken that has played out in Texas and South Carolina, where hundreds of children and adults are impacted by this highly contagious and often life threatening and altering disease. All because of the choice to remain unvaccinated.

At a time when federal leadership and healthcare policy may be in flux, it is more important than ever that Rhode Island affirm its commitment to evidence-based medicine. Senate Bill 2568 ensures that our state's public health decisions remain anchored in rigorous scientific standards and nationally recognized expert guidance. It protects children not only today, but for generations to come.

As a board-certified pediatric emergency medicine physician and professor of pediatrics and emergency medicine at Brown University, I urge you to support Senate Bill 2568. Our children deserve policies grounded in science, guided by expert consensus, and focused unwaveringly on their health and well-being.

Thank you for your consideration and for your service to the people of Rhode Island.

Respectfully,

Susan Duffy, MD, MPH
Board-Certified Pediatric Emergency Medicine Physician
Professor of Pediatrics and Emergency Medicine
Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University
Providence, Rhode Island