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OPPOSE

S.6141-D Golden
Senate Finance Committee

A.8123-B Gottfried
Assembly Education Committee

The Conference of Big 5 School Districts strongly opposes S.6141-D (Golden)/A.8123-B (Gottfried) which would alter the procedure for parents and guardians to exempt their children on religious grounds from immunizations required to attend public school.

Current law authorizes parents and guardians to obtain an exemption from immunizations for religious beliefs through a procedure that enables school districts to thoughtfully consider such requests so that the exemption is not exploited. This bill would oversimplify the process by merely requiring parents and guardians to complete a form in order to receive a religious exemption.

There is significant research demonstrating that serious infection rates increase substantially when vaccination rates decrease. Infectious diseases such as measles, varicella, pertussis and polio occur at higher rates among unvaccinated students. One of the greatest benefits of vaccinating students is the concept of “herd immunity” which protects those students who are immunocompromised where exposure to the stated infectious viruses can cause serious illness or death. Immunocompromised students include but are not limited to those that are being treated for cancers, pulmonary diseases, thyroid disease, lupus, HIV and other conditions. This Legislation will make it easier for parents and guardians to avoid vaccinating their children which in turn increases the risk of preventable disease outbreaks and the potential for unnecessary illness and deaths, especially in immunocompromised students.

The Conference of Big 5 School Districts supports the rights of parents and guardians with religious objections to immunizations and believes the current procedures in place for obtaining exemptions are sufficient. This bill is unnecessary and could present a public health risk to public school children by increasing the number of unvaccinated pupils. For these reasons, we urge you to reject S.6141-D/A.8123-B.