

## First pediatrician in Congress leads AAP-championed bill to increase vaccinations

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The Academy’s advocacy work to promote the safety and effectiveness of vaccinations takes place at every level of government. This work is critically important, as the number of U.S. measles cases hit a 25-year high and vaccine misinformation spreads rapidly on social media.

Advocating for federal legislation to help increase vaccination rates is one avenue for policy change that will help keep children and communities safe. This process played out with the shaping of a bipartisan bill that recently was introduced by Rep. Kim Schrier, M.D., FAAP (D-Wash.), the first pediatrician and only female physician in Congress.

The Vaccine Awareness Campaign to Champion Immunization Nationally and Enhance Safety (VACCINES) Act aims to increase vaccination rates across the country, recommending funding for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to conduct surveillance research and a national public messaging campaign. The Academy worked closely with Rep. Schrier’s office on the bill, which also was led by Rep. Michael Burgess (R-Texas), along with Reps. Eliot Engel (D-N.Y.), Brett Guthrie (R-Ky.), Kurt Schrader (D-Ore.) and Gus Bilirakis (R-Fla.).

“As a pediatrician, I understand that parents want to do what they think is best for their children, and some do not vaccinate because of unfounded fears,” said Rep. Schrier in a news release. “This bill will make sure that parents have access to facts about vaccines, so they can make an informed decision.”

In particular, the bill would help the CDC better understand what drives vaccine hesitancy and track changes in vaccine confidence and coverage rates. This information will be critical to combating vaccine misinformation and educating the public about the benefits and safety of vaccinations.

“Vaccines are safe, vaccines are effective and vaccines save lives,” said AAP President Kyle E. Yasuda, M.D., FAAP, in a news release following the bill’s introduction. “As measles outbreaks continue to spread, this bill could not be more important or timely.”

The number of cases topped 1,022 as of June 6. The CDC warned that if the trend continues, the country could risk losing its measles elimination status, which was achieved in 2000.

The Academy joined five other leading physician groups to support the VACCINES Act, explaining how vaccine hesitancy impacts patients of all ages, including those too young or too sick to be immunized.

“Vaccine hesitancy is a public health crisis and we support the VACCINES Act as one important step to help address it and as a way to better educate the public and our patients,” the organizations said in a joint statement.

Leaders from the organizations brought this message to Capitol Hill in early June, when they met with several key congressional offices and asked legislators to co-sponsor the bill. The AAP also led a letter with more than 230 medical, public health and advocacy groups, outlining the importance of the VACCINES Act. When the bill was introduced, the AAP mobilized its members to contact their representatives and ask them to consider supporting the legislation.

The Academy will continue to push for the bill’s advancement through Congress so that children and families can be protected from vaccine-preventable diseases.

### AAP opposes HHS proposal to weaken nondiscrimination protections



**Amer Acad Pediatrics** @AmerAcadPeds · May 28

Rather than discriminating against transgender and gender diverse individuals, medical groups are asking the Administration to work together to ensure patients have access to the quality care they need. #Docs4Coverage [aap.org/en-us/about-th...](http://aap.org/en-us/about-th...)



The Department of Health and Human Services recently announced a proposed rule that would roll back nondiscrimination protections under the Affordable Care Act (ACA), specifically in Section 1557 of the law. Here’s a breakdown of what the proposal does, what you should know and where the Academy stands.

#### *What is Section 1557?*

Section 1557, which has been in effect since 2010, prohibits discrimination in health coverage and care based on race, color, national origin, sex, age and disability in health programs and activities that receive federal funding. This includes most health care facilities, such as hospitals and physicians’ offices, and most health insurance companies.

#### *What does this proposal do?*

The proposal would weaken protections for LGBTQ individuals. It also allows religious exemptions that could restrict women's access to reproductive health care and weakens protections for those with disabilities and limited English proficiency.

*What is the AAP's position?*

The Academy, along with several other physician groups, came out in strong opposition to the proposal, outlining concerns that it would impede access to health care and make it difficult for vulnerable populations to receive the care they need. The Academy will weigh in with comments during the 60-day comment period on the proposal.

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