

We need your support on A2371/S2994 (Dinowitz/Hoylman): An act to repeal subdivision 9 of section 2164 of the public health law, relating to exemption for vaccination. With New York being in the midst of a measles outbreak, we need our lawmakers to support policy that will help to mitigate further spread of this very dangerous and contagious vaccine preventable disease.

- Vaccines are responsible for the control of many infectious diseases that were once common in this country. Vaccines have reduced, and in some cases, eliminated, many diseases that routinely killed or harmed infants, children and adults. The viruses and bacteria that cause vaccine-preventable diseases still exist and can be transmitted to people who are not protected by vaccines.
- New York State is experiencing firsthand the health risks created by allowing broad religious exemptions to immunization requirements. Currently, Rockland County, NY and New York City are combatting significant measles outbreaks. These outbreaks, which started in the Fall of 2018, have resulted in illness and hospitalizations, as well as lost days of school and work due to the need to halt transition of disease among unvaccinated individuals. The outbreaks occurred in communities with higher rates of religious exemptions.
- A 2013 outbreak in the Bronx in a religious community cost the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene close to \$400,000, with health department staff spending over 10,000 hours in working to stop the spread of the disease. Additional costs to health care providers, and individuals due to treatment and lost workdays were also incurred.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends an immunization rate of 95% in order to maintain herd immunity, but according to 2017-2018 New York state data, 467 public and private schools in New York had immunization rates below 85%.
- There is a wealth of evidence showing that under and unimmunized children are both at risk of death or serious illness themselves and put others at risk.
- As public health professionals, and as policy-makers, we both routinely weigh the ethical balance of protecting individual rights against protecting our communities at large. Both statute and case law have continually upheld that the weight of this choice must lean towards protecting the community at large when personal choice puts the lives of others at risk. The societal benefits of these public health policy decisions are cost-effective and improve length and quality of life, be it through restrictions on where you can use tobacco products, strict drunk-driving laws, or school vaccination requirements.
- Vaccines are one of the greatest public health successes of the 20th century and immunizing our children is of the highest public health priority.