

Testimony of

Deb Polun

Chief Strategy Officer

Community Health Center Association of Connecticut (CHC/ACT)

In Support of

House Bill 5044: An Act Establishing Connecticut Vaccine Standards

Public Health Committee

March 11, 2026

Thank you to Governor Lamont for raising this bill and allowing us the opportunity to provide comments in support.

On behalf of the Community Health Center Association of Connecticut (CHC/ACT), and its sixteen-member community health centers, I want to thank the Committee for its dedication to listening to Connecticut's residents about these important issues. Connecticut's community health centers serve more than 452,000 people each year – including over 262,000 HUSKY enrollees and 67,000 uninsured individuals – providing medical, behavioral health, dental, and some specialty care in hundreds of locations across the state.

CHC/ACT supports this bill, which would connect Connecticut's vaccine schedule to the Commissioner of Public Health's recommendations instead of the federal governments.

Vaccination is not just a personal choice; it is a community responsibility. According to the CDC, routine childhood vaccinations for children born between 1994 and 2023 have prevented over 500 million cases of illness, 32 million hospitalizations, and over 1.1 million deaths. These vaccines also led to \$540 billion in direct savings and \$2.7 trillion in societal savings.

At the state level, vaccination programs play a vital role as well. In 2024, health centers in Connecticut provided 170,282 vaccines, including flu, pneumonia, COVID-19, hepatitis A, diphtheria/tetanus/pertussis, measles/mumps/rubella, polio, and varicella. In order to maintain the public health of our state, it is crucial that the Connecticut Commissioner of Public Health has the authority to set out evidence-based guidelines on state vaccine policy.

Changing Connecticut's vaccine schedule to follow the recommendations of the Commissioner of Public Health will ensure that public health policy is guided by medical expertise instead of political pressure or misinformation. Allowing the Commissioner to create evidence-based guidelines will allow the state to effectively respond to public health threats and ensure that

vaccine recommendations reflect current medical research while maintaining consistent statewide standards for disease prevention.

Thank you for your consideration and your hard work on behalf of our great state. Please feel free to reach out with any questions: dpolun@chcact.org or 860.667.7820.