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## **H.B. No. 5044 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING IMMUNIZATIONS.**

Public Health Committee Chairs and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of the Association of School Nurses of Connecticut (ASNC) regarding Immunizations. The Association supports the elimination of the religious exemption which allows children in Connecticut schools to enter school without mandated vaccines. Although we appreciate the rights of parents to make decisions based on the best interests of their children, the issue of immunizations is a public health issue requiring consideration for the population at large and those with compromised immune systems.

The School Nurse Advisory Council (SNAC) submitted recommendations which include certain organizations in support of the elimination of the religious exemption to vaccines and others who are studying the issue. Support for the elimination is based on the following excerpt from the recommendations:

“School-level data released for 2018-19 indicates that the number of immunized children has decreased and the number of exemptions has increased. The school-level data for the 2018-19 school year shows that 134 schools in CT have vaccination rates for measles, mumps and rubella below federal guidelines. Nationally and in Connecticut increasing numbers of preventable diseases have been reported. Reduction in herd immunity due to decreasing vaccine rates is a concern.

Organizations including the Connecticut Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Connecticut Medical Society support vaccines to protect individuals and the public.

List below identifies the opinion of SNAC organizations regarding religious exemptions:

- American Academy of Pediatrics Connecticut- supports elimination of religious exemption.
- Association of School Nurses of Connecticut- supports elimination of religious exemption.
- Connecticut Nurses Association- studying the issue of elimination of religious exemption.
- Connecticut Association of Boards of Education- supports elimination of religious exemption.
- Connecticut Association of Public Schools Superintendents- supports elimination of religious exemption.
- Connecticut Federation of School Administrators- no opinion at this time.
- Connecticut Association for Health Care at Home- supports elimination of religious exemption.
- American Federation of Teachers, Connecticut- supports elimination of religious exemption.
- 1199- no opinion at this time”

Should this bill not pass, the Association requests that school nurses be removed from the current religious exemption list of authorized signatures on the form. School nurses have the right to decline as witnesses. Notarized signatures can be accessed at no cost to parents who choose this mechanism as a means to avoid vaccinations for their child.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important issue.

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