

AB 354 WHOOPING COUGH (PERTUSSIS) VACCINATION
ASSEMBLY MEMBER JUAN ARAMBULA

Summary

AB 354, similar to AB 2580 from 2008, will allow the Department of Public Health to place a pertussis booster vaccine among the necessary vaccinations for students prior to the start of the 7th grade. This bill will reduce rates of infections, and by connection, reduce the risk that infants too young to be vaccinated will contract the potentially fatal disease.

Background

Pertussis, commonly known as whooping cough, is the only disease that remains widespread in California despite high levels of vaccination in early childhood. Nationwide, pertussis cases increased from 1,730 cases in 1980 to 26,000 cases in 2005. In California, physicians reported more the 2,400 cases in 2005 alone. Pertussis outbreaks in California have forced the closing of schools, cost millions of dollars and sadly the lives of several infants.

The long-standing pertussis vaccination received in early childhood provides effective but temporary protection that lasts for only 5-10 years. Unfortunately, the pertussis vaccine given to infants and young children was not designed for use in persons older than 7 years of age.

In 2005, the first pertussis booster vaccines for adolescents and adults (combined tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis, referred to as "Tdap") were licensed in the United States. The Tdap booster is recommended for all adolescents and adults by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the federal Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP).

Current law [California Health and Safety Code, Chapter, Section 120335(b)] limits the requirement for pertussis to children seven years old or younger. The existing statute prohibits California from implementing the recommendations of the CDC, ACIP and the California Department of Public Health, Immunization Division, who recommend that adolescents receive a pertussis booster.

Purpose

Existing childhood immunization against pertussis does not provide the lasting immunity needed to control the disease and protect public health. After 5-10 years the childhood vaccine wanes, leaving older children and adults susceptible to infection and potential vectors of the disease.

The availability of a new booster vaccine for adolescents and adults, coupled with the dangerous increase in whooping cough in California necessitates a change in the current school vaccine requirements.

Specifically, AB 354 allows the Department of Public Health to add a pertussis booster vaccine to the list of vaccines necessary for adolescent children to be considered fully immunized by age. The State of California will not be required to pay for additional school required vaccines. The cost of a pertussis booster vaccine for students is covered through the federal "Vaccines for Children Program" and private insurance.

A pertussis booster vaccine will protect public health, reduce the rate of infection among adolescents and adults and help protect California's infants, too young to receive their first inoculation.

A simple booster shot can make the difference between life threatening infection and a normal healthy school day.

Supporters

California Immunization Coalition (CIC)
American Academy of Pediatrics
APSCME
California Medical Association
California Academy of Family Physicians
California School Nurses Organization
California State PTA

Opposition

Capitol Resource Family Impact