



February 16, 2021

Senator Jim Carlin
Human Resources Committee
Iowa Senate
1007 East Grand Ave.
Des Moines, IA 50319

Senator Mark Costello
Human Resources Committee
Iowa Senate
1007 East Grand Ave.
Des Moines, IA 50319

Senator Pam Jochum
Human Resources Committee
Iowa Senate
1007 East Grand Ave.
Des Moines, IA 50319

Dear Senator Carlin, Senator Costello, and Senator Jochum,

I am writing today on behalf of the Biotechnology Innovation Organization (BIO) to **oppose SF 193**.

BIO is a national trade association for the biotechnology industry, representing over 1,000 companies and academic institutions involved in the research and development of innovative healthcare, agriculture, industrial, and environmental biotechnology products. BIO members include companies working on vaccines and therapeutics to combat the COVID-19 pandemic. Our member companies are committed to rigorous science; the safety of our vaccine and therapeutics is our top priority.

Immunizations are a triumph of public health. Over the past century, high childhood immunization rates have led to millions of lives saved, cases of disease averted, and costs to the health care system saved. FDA approval and CDC recommendations for use of vaccines represent the gold standard; BIO therefore supports the use of vaccines according to FDA's and CDC's guidelines.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown us the devastating effects of an infectious disease unchecked by a vaccine. Biopharmaceutical companies have worked tirelessly over the past year to find a vaccine to provide the longed-for end to the pandemic, the full opening up of the economy, and a return to everyday activities. While questions from the public about the safety, efficacy, and speed of the COVID-19 vaccine are legitimate



and should be addressed, policies that sow doubt in people's minds merely serve as an undue barrier to the end of the pandemic.

Additionally, as a secondary result of the pandemic, Iowa saw routine pediatric immunization rates drop by more than 20% over the past year.¹ Nationally, immunization rates for adolescents and adults also fell by as much as 50%.² As we return to our pre-pandemic routines, strong immunization rates are needed to avert outbreaks of other infectious diseases such as measles, pertussis, and influenza on top of COVID-19.

The state legislature should focus on policies that reflect the best scientific evidence to facilitate access to vaccines for those that want to be vaccinated rather than policies that discourage it, especially in the middle of a pandemic. Alternative vaccine policies may include:

- Educational communications or campaigns about the importance of vaccination, including remaining up-to-date on routine immunizations during the pandemic;
- Increasing funding for public health and the immunization infrastructure;
- Lowering Medicaid cost-sharing for vaccines, as Medicaid-enrolled and uninsured adults are the only population that has any cost-sharing requirements for vaccines;
- Improving the state immunization information system (IIS) to ensure interoperability and the ability of all immunizer to report into the system; and
- Expanding scope of practice for different provider types to ensure adults can get vaccines in their communities at their convenience.

BIO and our members welcome the opportunity to discuss strategies for facilitating vaccinations. Please do not hesitate to reach out if we can be a resource.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Patrick J. Plues".

Patrick J. Plues
Vice President, State Government Affairs
Biotechnology Innovation Organization

¹ Ramm, Michaela. "Fewer Children Got Routine Vaccines in Iowa in 2020, Likely a Result of the Pandemic." The Gazette, 8 Dec. 2020. <https://www.thegazette.com/subject/news/health/childhood-immunization-schedule-iowa-routine-vaccination-coronavirus-vaccine-20201208>

² Trost, Alexa, Joanna Young et al. "How COVID-19 Has Impacted US Adolescent and Adult Vaccine Utilization." Avalere Health, 1 Feb. 2021. <https://avalere.com/insights/how-covid-19-has-impacted-us-adolescent-and-adult-vaccine-utilization>