

The Quorum

February 2022: The CA Legislative Vaccine Work Group

As the Omicron variant led to an unparalleled COVID-19 surge, legislators in Sacramento formed a legislative Vaccine Work Group to develop comprehensive, evidence-based policies to battle misinformation and stop the spread of COVID-19. The founding members of the Vaccine Work Group include Senator Richard Pan, Senator Scott Weiner, Senator Josh Newman, Assembly member Buffy Wicks, Assembly member Cecilia Aguiar-Curry, and Assembly member Evan Low.

The work group is dedicated to protecting children from COVID-19 by proposing legislation to increase vaccination rates and ensure the continuation of in-person learning. According to state data, just 26.3% of 5- to 11-year-olds are fully vaccinated against COVID-19. For 12- to 17-year-olds the rate is 64.4%.

Below are the bills that have been formally introduced or proposed to encourage further pediatric vaccination rates and ensure safe in-person learning environments.

[SB 866 \(Wiener, Pan\) Minors: Vaccine Consent](#)

Senator Scott Wiener, who represents the San Francisco area, introduced SB 866 on January 20th, which would allow minors 12 years and older to be vaccinated against COVID-19, and any other vaccination approved by the USFDA that meets the recommendations of the CDC, without parental consent. This bill adds onto existing state law that allows children 12 and older to consent to sexual and reproductive health, mental health, and drug and alcohol treatment services. Moreover, several other states already allow minors to access vaccines without parental consent. This was the first bill introduced by the Vaccine Working Group and is currently waiting for policy committee referral.

[SB 871 \(Pan\) Public Health: Immunization](#)

Senator and Pediatrician, Dr. Richard Pan introduced SB 871 on January 24th, which would add the COVID-19 vaccine to the list of required vaccinations for school entrance. This bill would expand on Governor Newsom's prior statewide vaccine mandate for schools by closing the personal belief exemption "loophole." This legislation builds on Dr. Pan's prior bill, SB 277, which passed in 2015 and put an end to the personal belief exemption for all the currently mandatory vaccines in schools. Of note, this is Dr. Pan's final term in the CA Senate due to term limit regulations. He assumed office December 1, 2014.

Lastly, another physician (OBGYN), Assembly member Dr. Akilah Weber, who represents San Diego, has announced that she will introduce a bill that would give school districts access to the state's immunization registry to see if a student is vaccinated against COVID-19. The hope is to better equip schools with vaccine data so they can continue with in-person learning.

More bills are expected to be introduced before the February 18th legislative deadline.

Sources:

<https://sd06.senate.ca.gov/news/2022-01-19-legislators-form-vaccine-work-group-boost-public-health-policies>

<https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2022-02-04/california-schools-could-check-student-vaccination-records-legislation>

The Quorum is a monthly policy spotlight. For any inquiries, please email Chapter 2 legislative and policy analyst, Karinne Van Groningen, at KVanGroningen@mednet.ucla.edu

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