



January 30, 2024

Senator Birdsell, Chairwoman
Senate Health and Human Services Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 101
33 N. State Street
Concord, NH 03301

Re: SB 559 relative to the definition of vaccine for purposes of the New Hampshire Vaccine Association

Dear Chairwoman Birdsell and Members of the Health and Human Services Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak on SB 559 relative to the definition of vaccine for purposes of the New Hampshire Vaccine Association. Bi-State Primary Care Association and our members respectfully request your support of SB 559.

Bi-State Primary Care Association is a non-profit organization that works to expand access to primary and preventive care for all New Hampshire residents. Bi-State's members include community health centers, federally qualified health centers (FQHCs), New Hampshire Area Health Education Center programs, clinics for the uninsured, networks, and consortia. Today, Bi-State represents 11 community health centers in New Hampshire that provide comprehensive primary care services to over 100,000, including approximately 20,000 children. Approximately 36% of health center patients are commercially insured, 35% are insured by Medicaid, 19% are insured by Medicare, and approximately 10% are uninsured. The health centers provide primary and preventive care, reproductive health care, substance use disorder treatment, oral health services, behavioral health services, and more. New Hampshire's health centers treat all patients regardless of ability to pay or insurance status.

The New Hampshire Immunization Program's Vaccines for Children Program is an innovative program designed to fund vaccines for Granite State children ages 0 through 19. The program allows the State to purchase vaccines at the lowest rate possible for all children, regardless of their insurance status or income, by using a combination of federal, state, and private insurance funds to pay for the vaccines. This program is invaluable to the children and families it serves and critical for the primary care providers across the state, including our community health centers.

SB 559 includes a technical correction to the definition of *vaccine* within the New Hampshire Vaccine Association statute. While the bill is a simple technical correction, this technical correction will have a positive impact on our health centers' ability to provide vaccines to their patients. SB 559 will allow the State to continue to purchase vaccines, including nirsevimab, at a significant discount. The State can then continue to offer these vaccines to health care providers.

Health centers cannot afford to purchase vaccines without knowing whether the cost of the vaccines will be reimbursed by insurance companies. Nirsevimab, which protects infants and toddlers against RSV-related pneumonia and hospitalization, is expensive. It is unlikely the health centers could offer this vaccine to their patients if it were not included in the Vaccines for Children Program.

New Hampshire's health centers have an amazing track record when it comes to vaccinating their patients: their child immunization rate is 42%, and the national average is 33%. Our health centers' patients can and do discuss the availability and need for vaccines for their children with their trusted primary care clinicians. It is imperative that those same patients also be able to access necessary vaccines from their clinicians without any barriers, including cost.

For these reasons, we ask that you recommend SB 559 ought to pass.

Thank you,

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