



VETO AB 144: Health

September 15, 2025

Governor Gavin Newsom
1021 O Street, Suite 9000
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Newsom:

On behalf of A Voice for Choice Advocacy and all those Californians who desire transparency and public input in our legislative and scientific process, I respectfully ask you to VETO AB-144.

AB 144 was gutted and amended in the final two days of the legislative session, leaving no time for committee consideration, public input, or stakeholder engagement. Sweeping health policy changes of this magnitude should go through the full legislative process—with transparency and debate—rather than being rushed through at the last minute.

While this Budget Trailer bill amends many code sections, AVFCA wishes to draw your attention to provisions centralizing vaccine policy in the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) and exempting it from normal oversight. These changes would create serious uncertainty for parents, doctors, schools, and the healthcare system.

Rather than ensuring stability, AB 144 risks undermining trust, creating conflicts with national standards, and slowing emergency responses. The bill shifts decision-making away from nationally recognized expert bodies such as ACIP, USPSTF, AAP, and HRSA to CDPH alone. Divergence from these authorities would leave doctors navigating conflicting guidance, schools and universities delivering mixed messages, and parents uncertain about which recommendations to follow. Instead of positioning California as a leader, this approach would isolate the state, weaken alignment with medical consensus, and complicate efforts to secure public confidence and federal support.

The legislation also exempts CDPH from administrative rulemaking when modifying immunization recommendations. Parents and doctors would be cut out of the process, insurers forced to comply within 15 days of publication, and legislators left with full political liability for mistakes since there would be no transparent record of weighing risks and benefits.

Parental rights and medical judgment would be further eroded by tying school medical exemption appeals exclusively to American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) standards. The bill removes reference to CDC and ACIP, which—despite concerns of political influence—are at least structured as independent advisory bodies with transparent processes. In contrast, the AAP is a professional association that receives significant funding from vaccine and pharmaceutical manufacturers, raising questions about neutrality. This creates the appearance of one-sided policymaking. Parents and doctors would lose the ability to make individualized decisions, children with rare conditions could be denied appropriate exemptions, and physicians would risk being second-guessed by state-appointed panels rather than trusted to use their professional judgment.



AB 144 also expands liability shields for providers, protecting them even for “residual effects” of vaccines administered under CDPH guidance. This creates a dangerous conflict: if CDPH authorizes a vaccine that ACIP does not, doctors would be shielded in California while acting outside the national standard of care. Families harmed in this scenario could find themselves with no remedy—barred from suing in California because of immunity provisions, and ineligible for federal vaccine court because the vaccine was not ACIP-recommended. This gap undermines trust and leaves both families and physicians exposed to uncertainty.

Locking California to the January 1, 2025 federal vaccine standards is equally problematic. If a new pandemic strain emerges or a critical vaccine is recommended after that date, California would have to wait for CDPH action, delaying the response when speed is most critical. Proponents may argue the state could act more quickly, but in practice a dual-track system would create confusion for providers, public health officials, and the public. Such inconsistency could disrupt emergency response efforts and even jeopardize federal funding tied to compliance. California should not adopt a system that builds in uncertainty at the very moments when clarity is most needed.

Californians trust you to balance public health with accountability and openness. AB 144 centralizes too much authority, creates conflicting standards, risks slower emergency responses, and undermines confidence in both government and medicine. Most importantly, it was advanced without proper legislative scrutiny or opportunity for public input. I respectfully urge you to veto this bill so that, if needed, a similar proposal can return next year and proceed through the full legislative process with transparency, debate, and stakeholder engagement.

Please VETO AB-144.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

C.E. von Rose-Hildebrand

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Giving issues a voice, A Voice for Choice Advocacy advocates for people’s rights to be fully informed about the composition, quality, and short- and long-term health effects of all products that go into people’s bodies, such as food, water, air, pharmaceuticals and cosmetics.