

Oppose HB 686

Del. J. Miller

HB 686 would eliminate the requirement of the human papillomavirus vaccine (HPV) for females entering the sixth grade.

In April 2007, Governor Kaine approved and enacted a bill, which was supported by 122 out of the 140 members of the VA General Assembly, that adds the HPV vaccine to the Virginia Board of Health's list of required immunizations for attendance at a public or private elementary, middle or secondary school, child care center, nursery school, family day care home or developmental center. **As with other immunization requirements, the HPV requirement includes an opt-out option for parents who object to vaccinations for religious or other reasons.**

The HPV vaccine has an average cost of \$360 for the three dose series, while treating cervical cancer is \$13,000. All can agree that cancer prevention is preferable to cancer treatment. In the current economic climate it does make sense to prohibit funding for a program that has a cost-savings for the Commonwealth.

Since the program was implemented in October 2008, approximately 8,000 young girls have received the vaccination through the Virginia Board of Health's immunization program.

- The HPV vaccination is recommended for girls as young as nine. If the vaccine is administered at this time it can prevent nearly 100% of the 4 types of HPV targeted by the vaccine¹.
- In 2006, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved Gardasil, a vaccine that can protect women against the most virulent strains of HPV that cause 70% of cervical cancers. This life saving vaccines is very expensive; a series of three shots administered within a six-month period costs approximately \$360.
- Given the high cost of the HPV vaccine, adding it to the list of required immunizations is critical to *making* the vaccine accessible through coverage by private health insurers and government vaccination programs.
- For populations that also experience disproportionate rates of poverty, coverage by private health insurers and government vaccination programs is the key to preventing cervical cancer².
- Between 1998 and 2002, about 300 women in Virginia were diagnosed with invasive cervical cancer annually, for a rate of 7.9 cases per 100,000 women. This is slightly lower than the national rate of 8.7 per 100,000.³

The HPV vaccine is safe.

- In July 2008, the FDA and CDC released a report that based on ongoing assessments of the vaccine's safety information the FDA and CDC continue to find that Gardasil is a safe and effective vaccine in preventing serious HPV related diseases such as cervical cancer⁴.
- The experiences of patients receiving the vaccine since FDA approval have been consistent with the clinical trials and are consistent with typical immune responses to vaccines.
- The HPV vaccine does not contain any mercury or thimerosal.

¹Vaccine Information Statement. (2007). HPV (Human Papillomavirus) Vaccine: What you need to know. Department of Health and Human Services Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

²Ward E, A Jemal, V Cokkinides, et al. Cancer Disparities by Race/Ethnicity and Socioeconomic Status, CA: A Cancer Journal for Clinicians, 54(2), March/April 2004.

³CDC. Surveillance, Epidemiology and End Results (SEER): State Cancer Profiles, 2005.

⁴Information from CDC and FDA on the Safety of Gardasil Vaccine. July 2008. From <http://www.fda.gov/cber/safety/gardasil>.

