



THE
IMMUNIZATION
PARTNERSHIP

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- Good morning, Chair Kolkhorst, Vice Chair Perry, and members of the Committee. My name is Allison Winnike and I am president and CEO of The Immunization Partnership.
- Our non-profit mission is to eradicate vaccine-preventable diseases by educating the community, advocating for evidence-based public policy, and supporting immunization best practices.
- Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 239, which would create a system to disseminate critical information about immunizations during a disaster.
- Previous disasters have demonstrated the need for such a system and that need has become all the more critical as we face the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The Immunization Partnership is a member of the Texas Family Leadership Council, a statewide coalition of organizations and philanthropists supporting families during the pandemic.
- Numerous members of the Council have expressed concern about the availability of immunization information during this pandemic.

- Child care centers needed basic information about safety.
- After-school programs wanted to continue operating for working parents, but needed clear guidance on best practices.
- And food banks that serve tens of thousands of Texans in crisis needed clear information to provide to their clients.
 - These providers don't have time to chase down information in the middle of a crisis. They need clear information that is easily accessible and primed to distribute to families and other frontline service providers.
- Texas has suffered through our share of natural disasters and public health emergencies over the years that have illustrated the importance of having clear communication channels informing the public about disaster-related preventative health measures such as vaccination.
- **Texans need good information and the organizations that serve families want to give it to them.**
- Just look back to Hurricane Harvey in 2017 that displaced thousands of Texans seeking refuge in shelters and thousands more bunking in tight quarters with family and friends at the beginning of flu season. My own home suffered flooding and my family was displaced by the storm.

- Not only were we faced with crowded living situations which are opportunities for disease outbreaks, Texans also had questions about the tetanus vaccine for those who were exposed to flood waters and debris.
- The information provided by SB 239 would have made a real difference during that disaster.
- And today, the COVID-19 pandemic has amplified that critical need to have an organized and timely communication process to distribute educational materials regarding immunizations.
- Shelters, community centers, schools, and child care facilities are effective places of information distribution to help the public understand what vaccinations they need to be protected during a disaster. In addition, these organizations also employ tens of thousands of Texans who also need basic and medically accurate information.
- One of the great features of SB 239 is that it helps the local health authorities by providing concise, up to date materials from the state through established channels that they can distribute in their community.
- This was the missing link to get the information at the state level down to the local level where people need it.
- Thank you so much for inviting me to testify for SB 239. I welcome any questions.