

December 2019

The Honorable John Mizuno, Chairperson  
House Committee on Health  
Thirtieth State Legislature  
State Capitol, Room 402  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Representative Mizuno:

As organizations serving and representing our members and the public, we have come together to provide you with information about the importance of vaccines and how they safeguard the health of our state. With recent vaccine-preventable disease outbreaks both locally (e.g. mumps) as well as nationally (e.g. measles, influenza, hepatitis A), there is increasing attention on the essential role of prevention in increasing community health and reducing costs to our healthcare infrastructure. As a legislator, your decisions play a key role in safeguarding the health of Hawaii's residents. We hope you use this information in your decision-making during this legislative session.

As demonstrated by the rapid uptake of vaccine during the hepatitis A and mumps outbreaks, as well as the enduring high vaccination coverage levels among our children and adults, the people of Hawaii continue to prioritize immunizations as part of their healthcare maintenance. This foundation helps to maintain Hawaii's status as one of the "the healthiest states in the nation." Science has proven vaccines are safe and save lives. Efforts that undermine timely access to safe and effective vaccines ultimately put the health of our families and communities at risk.

Please take a few minutes to review the attached fact sheets. If you have any questions regarding the information provided, please contact one of our organizations or Judy Strait-Jones from the Hawaii Immunization Coalition at 258-0078. We look forward to the opportunity to work with you to ensure continued access, availability, and promotion of vaccines to protect the health of the people of Hawaii.

Attachments

Supporting organizations:



- Hawaii Immunization Coalition – President, Judy Strait-Jones, MPH, MEd  
 Hawaii Department of Health – Immunization Branch Chief, Ronald Balajadia, MS  
 American Academy of Pediatrics Hawaii Chapter – President, Mae Kyono, MD, FAAP  
 Hawaii Academy of Family Physicians – President, C. Keola Adams, MD  
 East Hawaii Independent Physicians Association – President, Lynda Dolan, MD  
 The American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists Hawaii Section – President, Greigh Hirata, MD  
 Hawaii Keiki: Healthy and Ready to Learn – Benjamin Kilinski, MSN, APRN-Rx, CPNP-PC, NCSN  
 Hawaii Public Health Association – President, Hali Robinett  
 Hawaii Comprehensive Cancer Coalition – Chair, Brenda Hernandez, PhD  
 Hep Free Hawaii – Director, Heather Lusk  
 John A. Burns School of Medicine - Dean, Jerris R. Hedges, MD, MS, MMM  
 R. Weinstein Pharmacy – President, Richard Weinstein, RPh  
 Papa Ola Lokahi – Executive Director, Sheri-Ann Daniels, EdD  
 Student Immunization Initiative – President, Joanna Kettlewell, PhD student at the Department of Tropical Medicine at UH Manoa  
 Hawaii Public Health Institute – Executive Director, Jessica Yamauchi, MA  
 Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology Hawaii Chapter – President, Pam Carey-Goo, RN  
 Vaccine-Preventable Cancers Workgroup – Lead, Hali Robinett, MPH

# Why We Immunize

## Your Role

- As a legislator, you play a **key role** in ensuring continued access, availability, and promotion of vaccines. By supporting vaccine-related initiatives, you send a clear message that immunizations are important to protecting the health of Hawaii's people.
- Studies have demonstrated that vaccination requirements for child care, school, and college attendance increase vaccination rates and in turn decrease rates of vaccine-preventable diseases.<sup>1</sup> During the 2018–19 school year, 3% of Hawaii's kindergarteners were exempt from one or more vaccines. While the statewide exemption rate is low, vaccine exemptions tend to cluster geographically, leaving some communities vulnerable.<sup>2</sup>

## Vaccines are Safe

- Vaccines undergo a long and careful review before they are licensed by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Once in use, the FDA and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) closely monitor reports of adverse events associated with each vaccine.<sup>3</sup>
- Despite concerns about rare, serious adverse events, the disease-prevention benefits from vaccination are much greater than the possible side effects for nearly all vaccine recipients. The only exceptions to this are cases in which a person should not be vaccinated because of a serious medical condition like cancer, a disease that weakens the immune system, or a severe allergic reaction to a previous vaccine dose (e.g., those with contraindications or precautions to vaccination).

## Vaccines Save Lives

- Some diseases that once injured or killed thousands of children have been eliminated completely, and others are close to being gone—primarily because of safe and effective vaccines.<sup>4</sup>
- For kids born between 1994 and 2016, vaccination will prevent an estimated 381 million illnesses, 24.5 million hospitalizations, and 855,000 deaths in their lifetimes.<sup>5</sup>

## Vaccines are Effective

- Immunizations are one of the 10 great public health achievements in the 20th century. Dramatic declines in morbidity (illness) and mortality (death) have been reported in diseases for which vaccines are routinely administered.<sup>6</sup>
- Because of the high coverage levels of effective vaccines, once common diseases are now very rare. Hawaii has not seen a case of polio or tetanus (common during the pre-vaccine era) in the last 10 years and prevalence of other vaccine-preventable diseases remain low.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.thecommunityguide.org/findings/vaccination-programs-requirements-child-care-school-and-college-attendance>

<sup>2</sup> <http://health.hawaii.gov/docd/resources/reports/immunization-exemptions/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/parents/infographics/journey-of-child-vaccine-h.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> [https://health.hawaii.gov/docd/files/2019/08/Disease-Summary-Table-2009\\_2018\\_State.pdf](https://health.hawaii.gov/docd/files/2019/08/Disease-Summary-Table-2009_2018_State.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/partners/childhood/multimedia/animatedgraphic.html>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pubs/pinkbook/downloads/appendices/e/impact.pdf>

# 2019 STATE OF THE IMMUNIZATION UNION

## HAWAII

### Kindergarten Vaccination Rates

- MMR: 92%
- DTaP: 92%
- Hep B: 94%

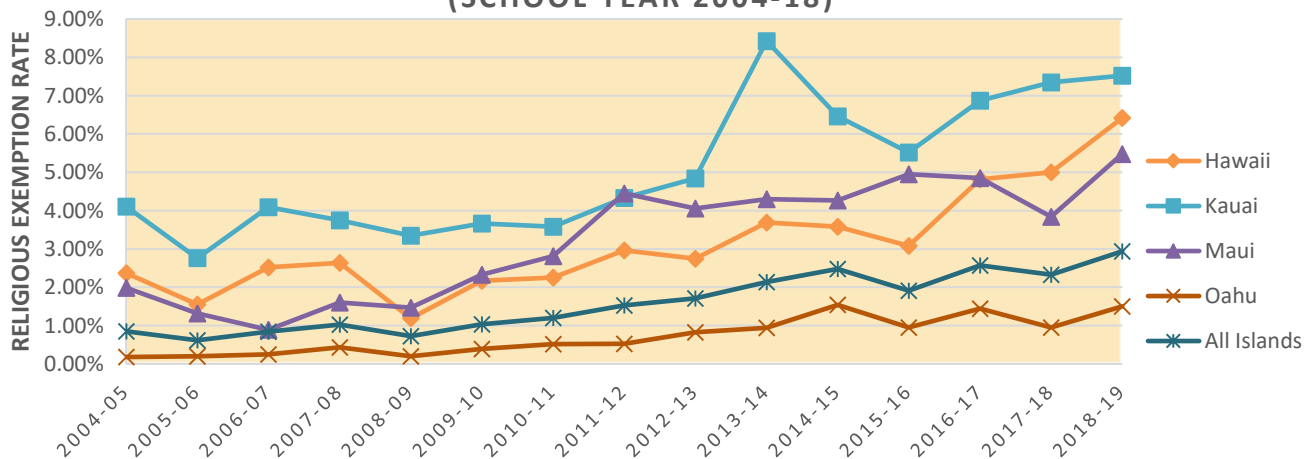
Source: <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/imz-managers/coverage/schoolvaxview/data-reports/coverage-reports/2018-19.html>

### Kindergarten Exemption Rates

- Religious Exemptions: 2.9%
- Medical Exemptions: 0.1%

The disparity of exemption rates across counties continues to be of concern. Kauai (7.5%) has the highest rate of religious exemptions, followed by Hawaii (6.4%), Maui (5.5%), and Oahu (1.5%).

HAWAII KINDERGARTEN RELIGIOUS EXEMPTION RATE (SCHOOL YEAR 2004-18)



### Adolescent Vaccination Rates

- HPV: 55%
- Tdap: 85%
- MenACWY: 86%

Source: <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/imz-managers/coverage/teenvaxview/data-reports/hpv/reports/2017.html>

### Adult Vaccination Rates

- Pneumococcal (18-64): 30%
- Pneumococcal (65+): 68%

Source: <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/imz-managers/coverage/adultvaxview/data-reports/general-population/reports/2016.html>

### Measles Outbreak

During January 1–October 1, 2019, a total of 1,249 measles cases and 22 measles outbreaks were reported in the U.S. While the measles outbreaks on the mainland are now under control, outbreaks worldwide, in countries including Japan and the Philippines, continue. Given Hawaii's connectivity to the world, the Hawaii Department of Health continues to recommend routine vaccination with the measles, mumps, rubella (MMR) vaccine as an important tool in protecting the health of the people of Hawaii.