PRESS RELEASE
Contact: Nick De Leeuw
C: (517) 575-9564

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First Lady Sue Snyder, MI Physicians and Nurses Urge Parents to Update their Children’s Immunizations As School Begins

Not only is it a Michigan law - it’s healthy for all students.

LANSING—Michigan’s First Lady Sue Snyder and a coalition of Michigan physicians and nurses are urging parents to help make sure their children are ready to learn this fall by updating their immunizations.

“Kids learn best when they’re safe and healthy,” Mrs. Snyder said. “Ensuring our Michigan kids get the vaccines they need is one of the easiest and best ways to help them learn and thrive and keep classrooms healthy.”

Mrs. Snyder noted a high correlation between low immunization rates and higher rates of dangerous infection.

“The occurrence of measles and whooping cough infections in the U.S. are higher than they’ve been in a generation,” said Dr. Rachel Christensen of the Michigan Osteopathic Association and the Michigan State University Associate Pediatric Residency Director at Sparrow Hospital in Lansing. “Not only do low immunization rates pose a threat to the lives of individual children and families, they also present our state with a significant public health concern. Time passes and younger people forget the dangers of terrifying diseases like polio and smallpox, so they become complacent. But that is exactly the wrong thing to do if we’re trying to make sure these illnesses are eradicated forever.”

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that Michigan has the 4th highest non-medical exemption rate in the nation. More than 5.3 percent of Michigan parents simply choose not to immunize their children.

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“Each year, thousands of children in our state become ill from diseases that could easily have been prevented,” said Patricia Bednarz, RN, a 25-year school nurse for the Lansing School District. “With immunization rates dropping in Michigan, the number of dangerous infections is likely to increase.”

In 2011, the last year for which statistics are available, less than 72 percent of Michigan 2 year old children were up to date on their recommended vaccines, and only 63 percent of adolescents were up to date on their recommended vaccines leading to dangerous outbreaks of preventable diseases.

At today’s event, doctors and nurses shared their worry that parents who cite concerns about the safety of vaccines are misinformed about their long-term impact.

“All around the globe, report after report shows that immunizations are safe and effective,” said Dr. Mary Mora, a Lansing-area pediatrician representing the Michigan State Medical Society. “They are thoroughly tested before being approved, and public health officials continually monitor their safety and effectiveness.”

Michigan’s health care providers including the Michigan Academy of Family Physicians, Michigan State Medical Society, Michigan Osteopathic Association, Michigan Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Michigan Association of School Nurses, the Michigan Council for Maternal and Child Health, the School Community Health Alliance of Michigan and the Michigan Association of Health Plans are united in their effort to better educate parents about the importance of childhood immunizations.

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