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KCHD Health Officer's Statement On Passage Of HB5105

CHARLESTON, W.VA. – The following is a statement by Kanawha-Charleston Health Officer, Dr. Steven Eshenaur, on the passage of HB5105, which pertains to the prevention and control of communicable and other infectious diseases, and the compulsory immunization of school children:



“As a Public Health Officer, experienced emergency room physician and veteran, I have seen first-hand the ravages of the diseases West Virginia’s current childhood immunization laws protect against. I am deeply worried about the consequences on public health with the passage of HB5105. By allowing philosophical exemptions to the law, we are weakening the public’s ability to prevent measles, mumps, tetanus, meningitis and polio. Make no mistake, these are debilitating and deadly diseases for which immunizations have been proven to be safe and effective. Childhood vaccines have kept the Mountain State free from Polio since 1970.

Yes, personal freedom is vital to our way of life in West Virginia and America, and I am all for it, but not when the lives of children are in danger. We owe it to our children to keep them safe, healthy and free of disability if it’s in our power to do so. In this case, it absolutely is. Hear this on repeat: If you are anti-vaccination, you are pro-disease. It’s as simple as that. If you are anti-vaccination, you want to weaken or eliminate laws that protect all our children. There is no other way to see it.

We all know how much Governor Justice and his wife Cathy adore children. He is a coach, mentor, father and grandfather. She is a mother, grandmother, teacher and passionate advocate for education. Neither would condone any threat to our littlest Mountaineers. Our children are more important than any agenda, and they are our future.

If Governor Justice signs this bill into law, he will join the legislature in turning the clock back nearly 100 years in immunization protection for our children. I pray he vetoes HB5105. Let’s all pray he does.”

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