



February 3, 2015

Dr. Tom Frieden
Director
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
1600 Clifton Road
Atlanta, GA 30329-4027

Dear Director Frieden:

On behalf of The American Consumer Institute (ACI), a nonprofit educational and research organization, I am requesting that new vaccines for the serogroup B meningococcal (MenB) disease, which has infiltrated college campuses from coast to coast, be given a “permissive” recommendation at the next Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) meeting on February 25, 2015.

ACI respectfully requests that the ACIP avoid restricting the vaccine to high-risk groups or when there is an outbreak. Such an overly restrictive recommendation would make the vaccine only available to a select number of students with certain pre-existing conditions or to students whose families can afford to pay out of pocket, as well as after there is an outbreak. Further, under such a designation, two students would have to be stricken with potentially fatal MenB before other students on campus would be vaccinated. Worse yet, it would mean doctors would not likely stock the vaccines or educate parents about the MenB vaccination. This overly restrictive route would take the decision-making power regarding children’s health away from parents and would ultimately continue a policy of responding to, rather than preventing, future MenB outbreaks.

The number of college students that have been stricken with MenB in the last several years is alarming. Last fall, two 19-year-old students at schools on opposite coasts died from the highly contagious bacterial infection. Sara Stelzer was a freshman at San Diego State University and Andrea Jaime was a nursing student at Georgetown University. Before these deaths, we saw outbreaks at Princeton and Drexel universities, which were related, and outbreaks at the University of California Santa Barbara (UCSB) and Kalamazoo College. A freshman lacrosse player at UCSB survived but had both feet amputated. I actually have personal experience with meningitis, having been afflicted with it as a child. I am one of the fortunate ones that recovered.

Currently, many parents have a false sense of security that their children are protected from MenB because they were immunized against other meningitis strains, as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommended in 2005. I had assumed my own daughter was protected because she was required to have a meningitis vaccine before entering college. But I was troubled to learn that unless the two MenB vaccines that were recently approved by the

Food & Drug Administration, Bexsero and Trumenba, are granted a permissive designation, she and other college students remain vulnerable.

The Affordable Care Act took an important step to ensure that families of all socioeconomic backgrounds have access to lifesaving vaccines. The law requires that any vaccine that receives a permissive recommendation from ACIP and is prescribed by a health care provider be covered under private insurance and the Vaccines for Children program. Without a permissive designation from ACIP for the MenB vaccines, this provision of the law would be undermined. Given that the lives of children and college students are at stake, ACIP and CDC should be promoting policies that help ensure all Americans are protected.

The key to preventing more avoidable student deaths and disabilities is granting a permissive designation so every child – not just those with parents wealthy enough to pay out of pocket – will have access to this lifesaving vaccine.

I thank you for your attention to this critical matter. I respectfully ask that a copy of this letter be distributed to each of the ACIP members prior to the February 25th meeting.

Sincerely,



Stephen B. Pociask
President and CEO
The American Consumer Institute
Center for Citizen Research
1701 Pennsylvania Ave., NW, Suite 300
Washington, DC 20006

CC: Dr. Larry K. Pickering
Executive Secretary
Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices