

SENATE BILL NO. 450

INTRODUCED BY D. EMRICH, T. MCGILLVRAY, C. GLIMM, B. BROWN, T. MANZELLA, S. HINEBAUCH, J. TREBAS, B. USHER, J. FULLER, K. BOGNER, C. FRIEDEL, S. VANCE

A BILL FOR AN ACT ENTITLED: "AN ACT REQUIRING ACCEPTANCE OF RELIGIOUS ~~OR CONSCIENCE~~ EXEMPTIONS TO CERTAIN MEDICATIONS; ~~PROVIDING RELIEF FOR VIOLATIONS OF RELIGIOUS OR CONSCIENCE EXEMPTIONS; PROVIDING A DEFINITION;~~ AMENDING SECTION 20-5-405, MCA; AND PROVIDING AN IMMEDIATE EFFECTIVE DATE."

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

NEW SECTION. Section 1. Acceptance of religious ~~or conscience~~ exemptions to immunizations required ~~-- penalties -- damages -- definition.~~ (1) ~~The following entities or persons shall accept without question or malice any religious or conscience~~ For the purposes of this chapter, discrimination on the basis of religion includes denials of requests for an exemption that is provided for from an otherwise required immunization, as the term is defined in 20-5-402, based on an individual's religion-an injection, a drug, or a medication that is required for employment purposes or for school or child care attendance:

~~(a) a state agency;~~

~~(b) any political subdivision as defined in 2-9-101;~~

~~(c) any person licensed or registered pursuant to Title 52, chapter 2, part 7, to provide day care;~~

~~(d) a licensed health care provider; or~~

~~(e) any other organization or entity licensed by the state.~~

~~(2) An entity or person listed in subsection (1) that fails to comply with the requirements of this section may not receive funding from the state.~~

~~(3) A person who is aggrieved by a violation of this section may:~~

~~(a) file a complaint as provided in Title 49, chapter 2, part 5; and~~

~~(b) seek compensatory damages and costs and attorney fees.~~

(2) For the purposes of this section, "religion" means a sincerely held belief of a religious

1 character, as contrasted with a purely secular view. The belief may be personal to the individual and does not  
2 need to be connected to or consistent with the beliefs or tenets of an established church, sect, or denomination.

3  
4 **NEW SECTION. Section 2. Acceptance of religious exemption from immunization.** (1) For the  
5 purposes of this chapter, discrimination on the basis of religion includes denials of requests for an exemption  
6 from an otherwise required immunization, as the term is defined in 20-5-402, based on an individual's religion.

7 (2) For the purposes of this section, "religion" has the meaning provided in [section 1].  
8

9 **Section 3.** Section 20-5-405, MCA, is amended to read:

10 **"20-5-405. Exemptions -- limitations on agency actions.** (1) (a) There is a religious and conscience  
11 exemption to the immunizations required under 20-5-403. A person enrolled or seeking to enroll in school may  
12 attend the school without obtaining the immunizations if the person ~~files with~~ notifies files with the governing  
13 authority ~~a notarized affidavit on a form prescribed by the department stating~~ through a signed statement or  
14 letter a notarized affidavit on a form prescribed by the department stating that immunization is contrary to the  
15 religious tenets and practices and/or conscience of the signer person's religion.

16 ~~(b) The statement must be signed:~~  
17 ~~(i) by the person enrolled or seeking to enroll in the school, if the person is an adult; or~~  
18 ~~(ii) if the person is a minor, by a parent, guardian, or adult who has the responsibility for the care and~~  
19 ~~custody of the minor.~~

20 (b) The statement must be signed:  
21 (i) by the person enrolled or seeking to enroll in the school, if the person is an adult; or  
22 (ii) if the person is a minor, by a parent, guardian, or adult who has the responsibility for the care  
23 and custody of the minor.

24 ~~(c)(b)(c)~~ The statement or letter must be maintained as part of the person's immunization records.

25 ~~(d) A person who falsely claims a religious exemption is subject to the penalty for false swearing as~~  
26 ~~provided in 45-7-202.~~

27 (2) (a) There is a medical exemption to the immunizations required under 20-5-403. A person  
28 enrolled or seeking to enroll in school may attend the school without obtaining the immunizations if a written

1 medical exemption statement signed by a health care provider specified in subsection (2)(c) is filed with the  
2 governing authority. The medical exemption statement must:

3 (i) attest that the physical condition of the person enrolled or seeking to enroll in school or the  
4 medical circumstances relating to the person indicate that some or all of the required immunizations are not  
5 considered safe; and

6 (ii) indicate the specific nature and probable duration of the medical condition or circumstances  
7 that contraindicate immunization.

8 (b) The person is exempt from the requirements of this part to the extent indicated by the medical  
9 exemption statement.

10 (c) The medical exemption statement must be signed by a person who:

11 (i) is licensed, certified, or otherwise authorized by the laws of any state or Canada to provide  
12 health care as defined in 50-16-504;

13 (ii) is authorized within the person's scope of practice to administer the immunizations to which the  
14 exemption applies; and

15 (iii) has previously provided health care to the person seeking the exemption or has administered  
16 an immunization to which the person seeking an exemption has had an adverse reaction.

17 (d) The medical exemption statement must be maintained as part of the person's immunization  
18 records and may not be photocopied or otherwise duplicated for use by a third party without permission of the  
19 student's parent or, if the student is an adult, the written consent of the student.

20 (3) (a) The department may not require a medical exemption form that imposes requirements that  
21 are more burdensome or otherwise in excess of the requirements described in this section. A form prescribed  
22 by the department that contains requirements not expressly described in this section is void to the extent that it  
23 purports to impose requirements not included in this section.

24 (b) A governing authority may not deny a medical exemption on the basis that a person has not  
25 completed portions of the medical exemption form that are void under this subsection (3).

26 (c) The department is not authorized to review a completed medical exemption statement or  
27 medical exemption form for the purpose of granting or denying a medical exemption.

28 (4) Whenever there is good cause to believe that a person for whom an exemption has been filed

1 under this section has a disease or has been exposed to a disease listed in 20-5-403 or will as the result of  
2 school attendance be exposed to the disease, the person may be excluded from the school by the local health  
3 officer or the department until the excluding authority is satisfied that the person no longer risks contracting or  
4 transmitting that disease.

5 (5) For the purposes of this section, "religion" has the meaning provided in [section 1].  
6

7 NEW SECTION. Section 4. Codification instruction. (1) [Section 1] is intended to be codified as an  
8 integral part of Title 49, chapter 2, part 3, and the provisions of Title 49, chapter 2, part 3, apply to [section 1].

9 (2) [Section 2] is intended to be codified as an integral part of Title 49, chapter 3, part 1, and the  
10 provisions of Title 49, chapter 3, part 1, apply to [section 2].  
11

12 NEW SECTION. Section 5. Effective date. [This act] is effective on passage and approval.  
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