

California pro-vaccination bill approved in first committee

By ACSH Staff — April 9, 2015



After a four-hour hearing, California lawmakers [approved Senate Bill 277](#)

[1], which prevents most exemptions (opting out) for parents trying to avoid vaccinating their children due to personal beliefs. The bill was proposed in the wake of the [Disneyland measles outbreak](#) [2] that began in December. The final vote on the bill was 6-2. However, it must pass through several more hearings before a possible Senate floor vote, and then go through the state Assembly, and then to Gov. Jerry Brown (whose vaccine beliefs are not so clear).

The bill's co-author, Sen. Richard Pan, D- Sacramento, who is also a pediatrician, [said of the bill](#) [3]: I've personally witnessed the suffering caused by vaccine-preventable diseases, and all children deserve to be safe at school. The personal belief exemption is now putting other school children and people in our community in danger.

Indeed, whether or not to vaccinate your child isn't solely a personal choice; it affects others around you in addition to your child. Only when a community's vaccination rate is high enough for herd immunity to be achieved will there be protection for people who are too young or too ill to be vaccinated. And as we wrote in September, several communities and schools in California have [vaccination rates that are unacceptable](#) [4].

If it were just a decision about their child, I think you would find no quarrel with having a right to make that decision, said Sen. Bill Monning, D- Carmel. You're making a choice not just for your child, not just for your family, but a choice that affects another person's child.

The hearing was particularly emotional with both vaccine activists and anti-vaxxers speaking out on the topic. However, the crowd was overwhelmingly anti-SB 277 and would repeatedly applaud or scoff in response to comments. At least two people were reportedly removed from the hearing for shouting over lawmakers.

One prominent concern among witnesses was that the bill would prevent children with medical disorders from receiving vaccine exemptions. Sen. Holly Mitchell, D-Los Angeles, assured that the bill would surely not prevent such kids from getting medically-indicated exemptions, then asked bill opponents to find any language in SB 277 that stated otherwise. They were unable to find the

alleged section of concern.

While SB 277 clearing its first committee is great news, the bill still has a long way to go. And misguided anti-vaxxers, [with the help of Robert F. Kennedy Jr.](#) ^[5], will most certainly continue to fight it, based on their superstition-based antipathy, loudly trumpeted during the hearing.

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[1] <http://www.sacbee.com/news/politics-government/capitol-alert/article17904647.html>

[2] <http://acsh.org/2015/01/disneylands-measles-outbreak-continues-spread-100-percent-connected-anti-vaccine-movement/>

[3] <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/04/09/us-usa-california-vaccine-idUSKBN0N00A420150409>

[4] <http://acsh.org/2014/09/vaccination-rates-incredibly-low-affluent-hollywood-schools/>

[5] <http://acsh.org/2015/04/rfk-jr-equates-vaccinations-to-a-holocaust-yes-he-went-there/>