

July 16, 2026

The Honorable Ronald Mariano
Speaker of the House
State House
Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable Aaron Michlewitz
Chairman, House Committee on Ways and Means
State House
Boston, MA 02133

RE: H2554 - An Act Relative to Routine Childhood Immunizations

Dear Chairman Michlewitz:

On behalf of MassBio and our over 1700 members, I write in support of **H.2554, An Act Relative to Routine Childhood Immunizations**. This legislation strengthens Massachusetts' school immunization policies by eliminating the non-medical religious exemption for routine childhood vaccinations and improving statewide immunization reporting.

As the nation's leading biotechnology hub, Massachusetts has played a critical role in advancing vaccine research, development, and innovation. Ensuring high vaccination coverage reflects our longstanding commitment to science, evidence-based public health policy, and the health of all residents. While our statewide vaccination rates remain high, those averages mask troubling local declines in vaccine coverage, leaving children and communities vulnerable to outbreaks of diseases such as measles.

The increasing use of non-medical exemptions is particularly concerning. During the 2025–2026 school year, religious exemptions reached their highest level since Massachusetts began reporting this data in 1985, representing more than 1,000 kindergarten students. Additionally, 163 kindergartens reported MMR vaccination rates below the 95% threshold needed to prevent measles outbreaks, while more than one-third of Massachusetts kindergartens failed to report immunization data altogether. Without complete and transparent reporting, public health officials cannot effectively identify and respond to emerging risks.

Experience from neighboring states demonstrates that strong vaccine policies are effective. After Maine eliminated religious and philosophical exemptions in 2019, kindergarten vaccine exemptions declined dramatically—from 6.2% in 2018 to just 1.0% in 2024—while immunization rates improved. Similar policies in California, Connecticut, New York, and West Virginia have strengthened community protection against vaccine-preventable diseases.

Public support for these protections is also clear. A 2025 statewide survey found that 90% of Massachusetts voters support school vaccine requirements, 70% support eliminating the religious exemption through H.2554, and 75% of parents with school-aged children support the legislation. The overwhelming majority of respondents also recognize that vaccines are safe, effective, and essential to protecting school communities.

H.2554 will strengthen community immunity, improve transparency through better immunization reporting, and help protect the most vulnerable members of our communities from preventable disease. For these reasons, MassBio respectfully urges the Legislature to pass H.2554 and reinforce Massachusetts' commitment to safeguarding public health.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Ed Copping

Ed Copping
Head of Government Affairs
MassBio