

Ethics, Politics, and Evidence: Reflections on Michigan's Waiver Education Requirement

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What are the alternatives to Michigan's model of reform?

MIKE SNYDER
GOVERNOR



STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY HEALTH
LANSING

IMMUNIZATION WAIVER FORM

INSTRUCTIONS TO PARENTS OR GUARDIANS:

Vaccine-preventable diseases are still with us. Immunizations are one of the most effective measures to protect children from diseases and even death. A high proportion of children must be immunized to prevent outbreaks of disease in schools and other places where children work and play closely together.

Sections 9208 and 9211 of the Michigan Public Health Code require that a parent, guardian, or person having a child registered for the first time in a Michigan school and/or in 7th grade, or in a program in this state shall present to officials at the time of registration or no later than the first day of school a certificate of immunization verifying that the child has been vaccinated against polio, hepatitis B, and varicella (chickenpox). Pneumococcal conjugate vaccine and Tdap vaccine are also required for preschool-aged children. Meningococcal vaccine and Tdap vaccine are also required for children entering 7th grade or higher and newly enrolled in the district.

Parent or guardian wishing to exempt his or her child from immunization must provide a written statement of philosophical objections to the disease prevention program.

Increased Efforts by Physicians?

BUT

- 20-40% of pediatricians dismiss (or refuse to admit) families that refuse vaccines (Flanagan-Klygis, Sharp, and Frader 2005; O'Leary et al. 2015).
- The American Academy of Pediatrics recently affirmed this practice (AAP 2016).



Eliminate Nonmedical Exemptions?

- California did this in 2015 with SB 277 (in effect in 2016).
- AMA, AAP, AAFP, ACP support eliminating nonmedical exemptions



Eliminate Nonmedical Exemptions?

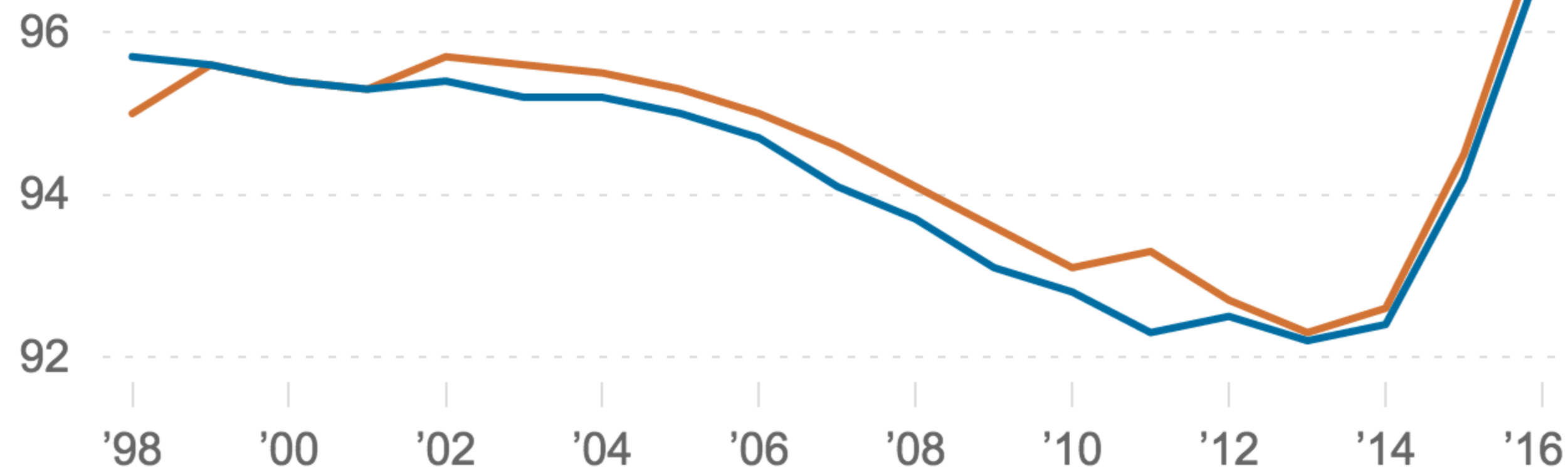
BUT

- Some parents will remove children from school and daycare
- Some private schools may not enforce requirements
- Some physicians may support marginal or fraudulent *medical* exemptions; these tripled since 2015 (LA Times, 11/8/17)
- Efforts to eliminate exemptions may cultivate greater political polarization
 - California's Senate Bill 277 passed on a near party-line vote
 - Almost all Democrats in favor, almost all Republicans opposed

California's kindergarten vaccination rates

■ Measles ■ Pertussis/whooping cough

98% fully immunized

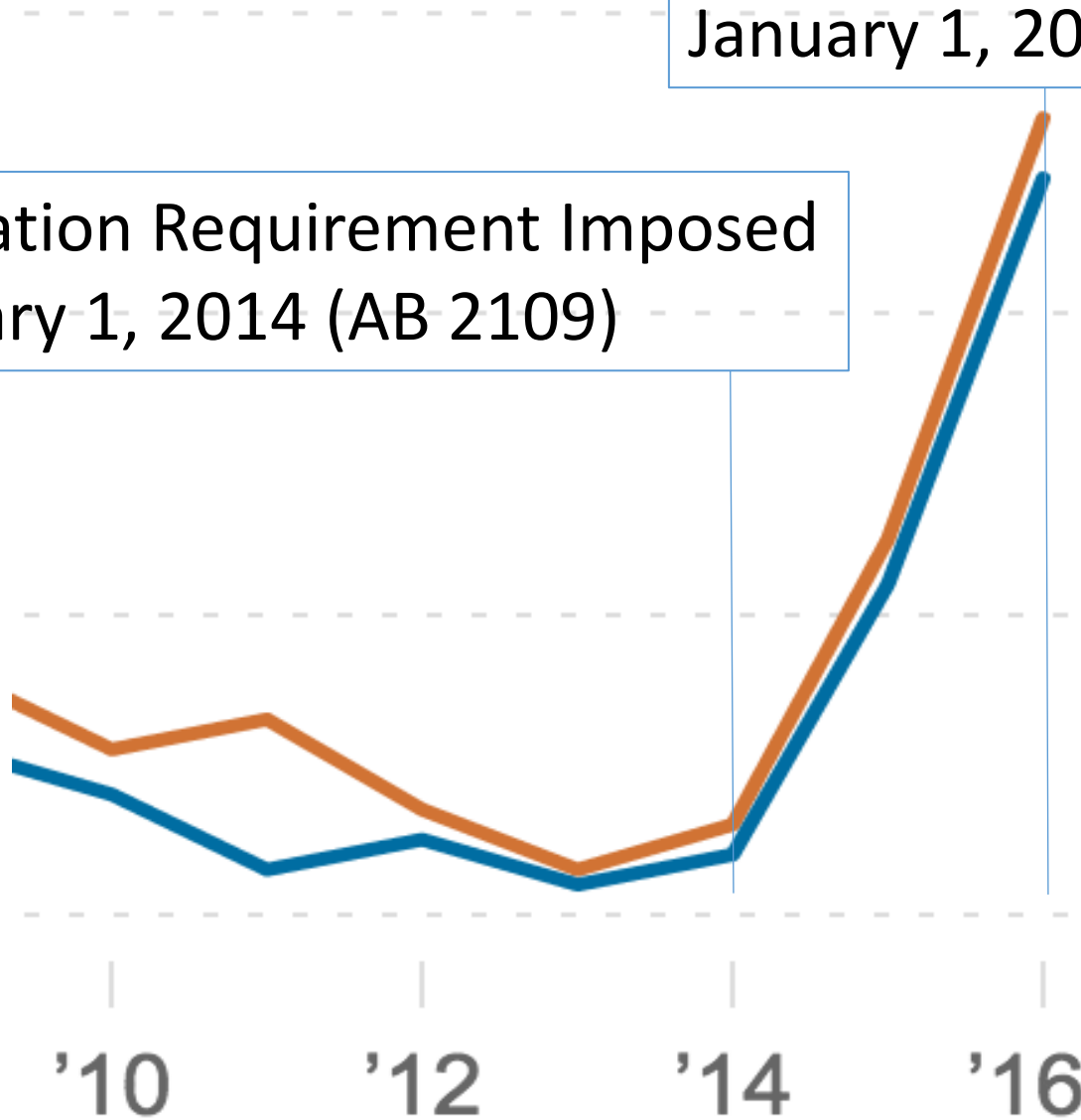


Source: California Department of Public Health

Len De Groot / @latimesgraphics

Nonmedical Exemptions Eliminated
January 1, 2016 (SB 277)

Education Requirement Imposed
January 1, 2014 (AB 2109)



Eliminate Nonmedical Exemptions?

BUT

- Assembly Bill 2109 was working!
 - This law imposed an education mandate.
- If you can promote public health while protecting parent's rights, then you should do that (as MI does, and as CA used to do)
- Burdensome education distinguishes complacent refusers from committed refusers.
- Education promotes informed consent to refuse vaccines.

Navin, M., Largent, M. 2017. "Improving Nonmedical Vaccine Exemption Policies: Three Case Studies," Public Health Ethics, 10(3): 225-234

What Did Michigan's Immunization Education Requirement Accomplish?

RICK SNYDER
GOVERNOR

INSTRUCTIONS TO PARENTS OR GUARDIANS:

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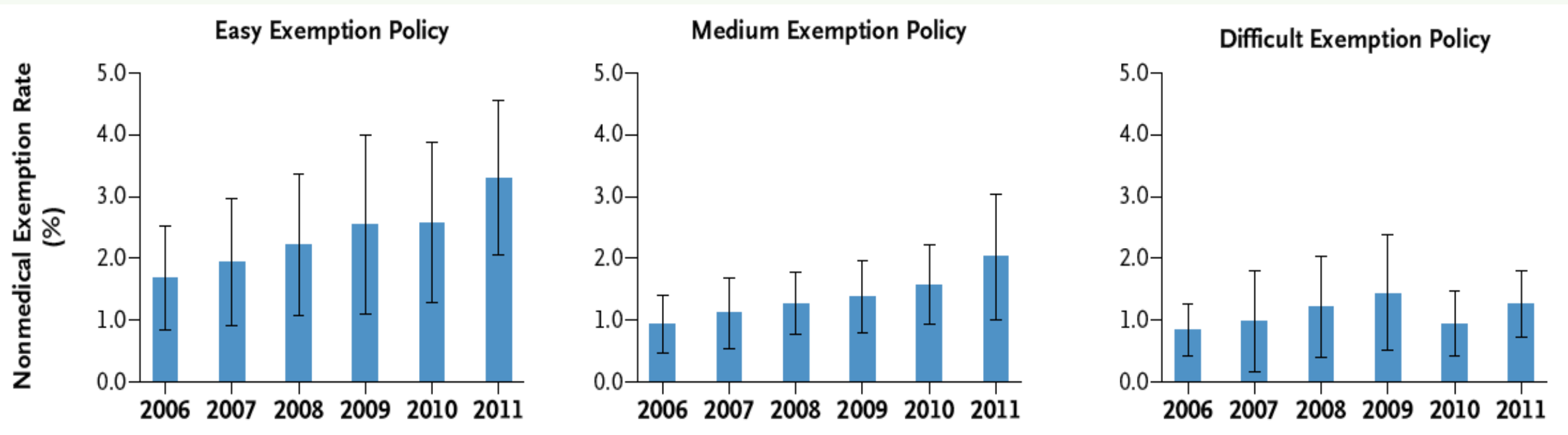
Parent or guardian wishing to exempt his or her child from immunization must submit a written statement of philosophical objection to the disease or diseases covered by the immunization program.

Michigan's Education Requirement Associated with Waiver Rate Decrease at County Level

Counties whose LHDs first initiated educational sessions as part of the non-medical vaccination waiver process after the December 2014 rule change were **27 times more likely to have a decreased waiver rate** than those that already required educational sessions ($p < 0.01$).

Navin, M., Largent, M., and McCright, A. "Efficient Burdens Decrease Vaccine Waiver Rates: A Cross-County Comparison of Michigan's Vaccination Waiver Education Efforts" (manuscript under review).

“....rates of nonmedical exemptions in states with easy exemption policies were 2.31 times as high as rates in states with difficult exemption policies.”



Omer, Richards, Ward, Bednarczyk, “Vaccination Policies and Rates of Exemption from Immunization, 2005-2011,” *NEJM* 367 (Sept 21, 2012).

A photograph of two healthcare professionals, a Black woman on the left and a white woman on the right, both wearing white lab coats. They are seated at a desk in a clinical or office environment, with a computer monitor and keyboard visible in the background. The Black woman is gesturing with her right hand while speaking to the white woman, who is listening attentively with her hands clasped. The image has a soft, slightly faded overlay.

What Did Michigan's Immunization Education Requirement Accomplish for People Who Attended Education Sessions?

Subsequent Immunization Behavior for Children in Oakland County (2015)

3999	children for whom parents refused at least one required vaccine at 2015 Oakland County Health Division waiver education session
657	children who subsequently (within 8-20 months) received at least one vaccine their parent refused at 2015 waiver education session
16.4%	Success!!!

OR MAYBE NOT

Subsequent Immunization Behavior for Children in Oakland County (2015)

Reason	# Refused	# Received Refused	% Received Refused
Religion	542	24	4.4%
Safety	2055	166	8.1%
Disease	342	36	10.5%
Alt. Schedule	1181	463	39.2%

Navin, M., Wasserman, J., Bies, S., Ahmad, M. “Where are the Missing Waivers?: One Michigan Health Department’s Experience with Vaccine Waiver Education” (in preparation).

A photograph of two healthcare professionals, a Black woman on the left and a white woman on the right, both wearing white lab coats. They are seated at a desk in a clinical or office environment, with a computer monitor and keyboard visible in the background. The woman on the left is gesturing with her right hand while speaking, and the woman on the right is listening attentively with her hands clasped. The image has a soft, slightly faded overlay.

What *Else* Did Michigan's Immunization Education Requirement Accomplish for People Who Attended Education Sessions?

Interviews with Waiver Educators: Their Goals

“My main goal is to establish trust, so they feel that they can trust me as an individual; as a professional. Then, maybe they’ll trust what I have to say about vaccines. So my goal is to establish trust.”

“I hope to plant a seed, that they will actually take with them and actually do some more research and open their mind up to the other side of the story. That’s my hope.”

Interviews with Waiver Educators: Their Methods

“What my reasonable expectation was at the beginning and what it is now is totally different...we felt really vigilant so we butted heads with those who are coming in also with their strong feelings and it wasn’t going to work. I could see very quickly that that approach was not going to be um positive.”

Interviews with Waiver Educators: Their Methods

“Listen, you’re a mom, I’m a mom. There are so many uncertainties as a parent, you are making the best decision you know how’....So I’ve just changed and I really have a soft approach, and ‘we are all in the same boat, and we’re here to help you and answer any questions’ and try to get that in that ‘we are your friends not your enemies...’”

Navin, M., Kozak, A., Clark, E. “The Evolution of Immunization Waiver Education in Michigan: A Qualitative Study of Vaccine Educators,” (manuscript under review).

The background of the image is a dense, overlapping pattern of human head silhouettes. These silhouettes are rendered in a variety of pastel colors, including shades of pink, light blue, yellow, and grey. They are all facing towards the right side of the frame, creating a sense of a crowd or a collective group. The silhouettes are of different sizes and are layered on top of each other, giving the background a textured, busy appearance.

What More Can Be Done?

Cultural Change?

- Our choices are informed by our beliefs about what *people like us* are doing.
- We may change people's beliefs about vaccination by changing their beliefs about what whether *people like them* vaccinate.
- So, for example, we may place some hope in efforts like *I Vaccinate Michigan*
 - We may be especially hopeful about this campaign's pro-vaccine parent testimonials, e.g. on YouTube and embedded in Facebook posts.

IVACC  NATE.ORG

A healthcare worker, likely a nurse or doctor, is shown from the chest up, wearing blue scrubs and white gloves. They are holding a syringe with a needle. In the background, a parent is cradling a baby in a white shirt. The scene is set in a clinical or hospital environment.

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