



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Date: February 10, 2015

Contact: Kate Reutersward  
[kate@prcollaborative.com](mailto:kate@prcollaborative.com) / 202.339.9598

## VACCINATE NOW

### City Health Leaders Issue Urgent Message to Parents and Policymakers

*Big Cities Health Coalition Members on Front Lines of Measles Epidemic Call For Vaccination, More Robust State-Level Monitoring, and Withdrawal of Proposed Budget Cuts to Federal Immunization Efforts*

Washington, DC -- Big Cities Health Coalition (BCHC) members are on the front lines of the measles epidemic in Los Angeles, San Diego, Phoenix, Seattle, Denver, Washington, DC, and, most recently, Chicago. While some skeptics continue to grandstand on the settled science of vaccines, local health departments are leading the efforts to prevent and contain the spread of measles, which is often described as the most contagious disease on earth.

“We are seeing virtually eradicated diseases return to the United States thanks to misinformation, regulatory loopholes, and a ridiculously cumbersome system,” said Bob England, MD, Director of the Maricopa County Department of Public Health in Phoenix, Arizona. “This is a completely unnecessary step backwards for the United States, and health agencies on the local, state, and federal levels are working overtime to compensate for the holes we have created in the system.”

The BCHC is urging strong action on the local, state, and federal levels.

1. Parents should **vaccinate their children**, with exemptions available where medically appropriate.
2. Health agencies need to create and/or maintain robust **state registries** (or local registries, where applicable) to track vaccinations, which they can do through public school or medical office audits. Local departments need to be able to retrieve this sensitive data in a timely manner to address gaps in immunization coverage.
3. **Adequate funding** must be allocated to local and state health departments in order to create and maintain systems that effectively prevent and contain outbreaks. Routinely cutting public health funding is an annual affair, and relying on emergency preparedness dollars once a crisis strikes is inefficient and leads to undue suffering.
4. State and local health departments should work with policymakers in their jurisdictions to **close or minimize existing exemption loopholes**. Big

ATLANTA (FULTON COUNTY)

BALTIMORE CITY

BOSTON

CHICAGO

CLEVELAND

DALLAS (DALLAS COUNTY)

DENVER

DETROIT

HOUSTON

LOS ANGELES COUNTY

MIAMI (MIAMI-DADE COUNTY)

NEW YORK CITY

PHILADELPHIA

PHOENIX (MARICOPA COUNTY)

COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

SAN ANTONIO

SAN FRANCISCO

SAN JOSE (SANTA CLARA COUNTY)

SEATTLE (KING COUNTY)

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA





City health officials call for federal leadership and guidance in developing standard exemption procedures that discourage parents from claiming exemptions.

5. Long-ignored laws and regulations that protect vulnerable individuals from being exposed to infectious disease should be enforced by local authorities. These regulations include, for example, requiring proof of vaccination in order to attend public school.

ATLANTA (FULTON COUNTY)

“These policies are not just evidence-based best practices; they are common sense,” said BCHC Director Shelley Hearne, DrPH.

BALTIMORE CITY

BOSTON

Measles was declared eradicated in the United States in 2000, and cases since that time have mainly occurred through travel or migration. However, as the U.S. continues to see record number of cases this year, the risk of measles re-establishing itself in the U.S. grows. Maintaining recommended vaccination coverage will prevent measles from again becoming widespread in the U.S. and can prevent a single case from becoming an epidemic.

CHICAGO

CLEVELAND

DALLAS (DALLAS COUNTY)

DENVER

“There is a straightforward relationship between the spread of measles and the number of unvaccinated people in a community,” said San Diego County’s Public Health Officer Wilma Wooten, MD, MPH. “We have a very simple way to stop this disease in its tracks, and that is to get vaccinated.”

DETROIT

HOUSTON

LOS ANGELES COUNTY

Because measles has become rare in the United States over the past decades, Americans often don’t realize how dangerous it can be. The characteristic rash and fever are much more severe than those with experienced in chicken pox, and complications can include pneumonia, permanent hearing loss, encephalitis, and death.

MIAMI (MIAMI-DADE COUNTY)

NEW YORK CITY

PHILADELPHIA

PHOENIX (MARICOPA COUNTY)

“At the moment, we are focused on increasing the number of persons who are vaccinated to prevent measles from getting a foothold in areas of under-vaccination and spreading,” said Public Health – Seattle & King County’s Interim Health Officer Jeff Duchin, MD. “Long term, however, we need to maintain high vaccination rates to ensure protection across the community.”

COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

SAN ANTONIO

SAN FRANCISCO

SAN JOSE (SANTA CLARA COUNTY)

*The Big Cities Health Coalition (BCHC) is a forum for twenty leaders of America’s largest metropolitan health departments to exchange strategies and jointly address issues to promote and protect the health and safety of the 46 million people they serve. Together, these public health officials directly affect the health and well being of one in seven Americans. For more information about BCHC, please visit [www.bigcitieshealth.org](http://www.bigcitieshealth.org).*

SEATTLE (KING COUNTY)

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA



*The BCHC is a project of the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO). NACCHO represents the nation’s 2,800 local governmental health departments. These city, county, metropolitan, district, and tribal departments work every day to protect and promote health and well being for all people in their communities. For more information about NACCHO, please visit [www.naccho.org](http://www.naccho.org).*

##

