

FIVE VACCINE POLICY CHALLENGES FACING TEXAS



THE PROBLEM: Emerging Legislative Trends Put Public Health at Risk

In 2003, the passage of Texas HB 2292 permitted nonmedical vaccine exemptions to accommodate personal beliefs. Since then, Texas has seen year-over-year increases in school vaccine exemption rates. Worryingly, during the 2021-2022 academic year, more than 85,000 school-age children had a nonmedical exemption for school-required vaccines.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic and various federal mandates, bills filed in several states in 2021 and 2022 attempted to link vaccination status to civil liberties — a move that could undermine immunization programs and pave the way for greater public health dangers.

These trends point to five areas of concern — all of which put public health at risk — as we enter the 2023 state legislative session:

- 01 | The erosion of school vaccination programs and requirements.
- 02 | Limitations on the ability of businesses to develop workforce health and safety policies.
- 03 | Constraints on the use of emergency use authorization (EUA) medications and vaccines.
- 04 | The redefinition of discriminatory practices related to vaccination status.
- 05 | Prohibitions or limitations on vaccine development and research.

THE SOLUTION: Support Bills that Strengthen Vaccination Programs

Despite the growing number of bills that would limit or restrict vaccine access or programming, Texas state policymakers continue to pass bipartisan bills supporting vaccination. By supporting bills that strengthen vaccination programs and research to increase immunization rates, Texas lawmakers can promote public health and demonstrate leadership when other states across the country look to Texas for guidance.

[The Future of National Vaccine Policy Runs Through Texas](#) (2022), authored by Rekha Lakshmanan and Kirstin R.W. Matthews, explores recent and future legislative vaccine policy challenges and opportunities in Texas. The brief was presented during the 2022 [Texas Vaccine Policy Symposium](#) at Rice University's Baker Institute for Public Policy on October 14, 2022.

For more information on vaccines, visit the Vaccines Cause Adults page at: bakerinstitute.org/vaccines-cause-adults.

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