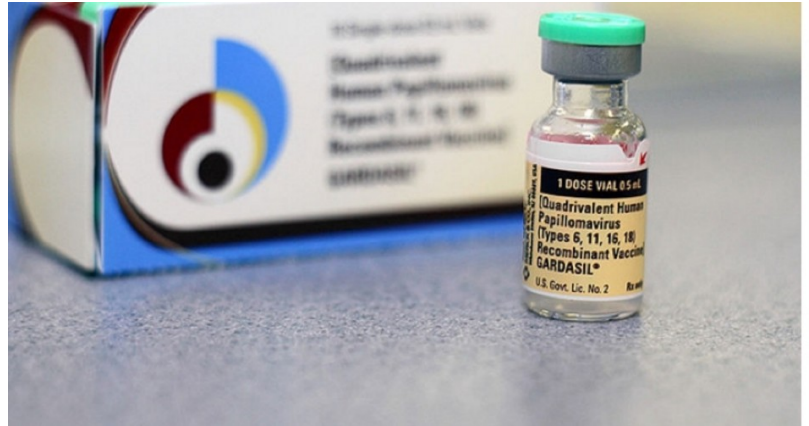




Written by [Alex Newman](#) on August 27, 2015

Uprising Against HPV Vaccine Mandate Sweeps Rhode Island

Rhode Island health bureaucrats are facing an uprising among parents, lawmakers, and even some doctors after issuing a deeply controversial vaccine mandate last month. Unless it is reversed, the decree purports to require that all 7th grade students, generally about 11-years old, be vaccinated against a sexually transmitted disease (STD) prior to starting school in September. Despite making headlines nationwide amid growing protests and public outrage about what critics say is an attack on parental rights, state officials reportedly have no plans to back down on the HPV shot. Neither do activists, though, and state lawmakers are already vowing to take action.



Leading the public outcry against the mandate is the recently formed grassroots group [Rhode Islanders Against Mandated HPV Vaccinations](#). In a statement to *The New American*, Aimee Gardiner, co-leader of the organization, said the goal was to protect parental and civil rights. “Mandating a vaccine that is attached to school attendance that is not a public health threat or transferable in the classroom is not okay,” she said. “It is bad public policy, and it is a bad use of power from the Rhode Island Department of Health.”

The campaign, which seeks to have the governor overturn the mandate, uses the Twitter hashtag #NOHPVmandateRI. Gardiner explained that the public was not even informed about the mandate, except in an announcement on the health department’s website, “which is not a place of regular checking for any average citizen.” Most citizens found out about it either from threatening letters sent by schools, or from recent media reports surrounding the growing statewide movement to quash the mandate. Outrage is still growing.

“This vaccine strikes people in different ways,” Gardiner continued. “Many are upset that this is a sexually transmitted disease and the Department of Health is mandating it. That crosses the line with personal and family values and points of appropriate discussions, as many parents feel an STD conversation is not needed at 11 years old.”

Citing U.S. government data, Gardiner also noted that the Gardasil vaccine in question has three times more reported adverse reactions than all other vaccines combined. [Numerous deaths](#) and [permanent disabilities](#) have been reported following administration of the vaccine. Gardiner also said that there is no proof that the vaccine has stopped a single case of cervical cancer, and that the shot has not been around long enough to know what the long-term side effects might be.

“The Department of Health says it has no plans to reverse the mandate,” she continued. “However, we also have no plans of stopping our efforts until the mandate is reversed.”



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Last week, about 100 members and supporters of the group, including three doctors and four state lawmakers, held a rally and press conference at the Cumberland Public Library ahead of a presentation by health bureaucrats on the vaccine mandate. The outraged crowd, mostly concerned parents, carried hand-made signs with slogans such as “my child, my choice,” “no mandate,” and “it’s a family’s choice, not the government’s,” showed pictures [published online by local media outlets](#) and activists.

Among those speaking was Dr. Mark Brady, who told the crowd that the vaccine mandate “smacks of paternalism” and that the health department “cannot demonstrate a clear and present danger from the virus.” Another doctor, Christopher Black, told the crowd that he did not want his patients, children, or friends’ children to be part of an “experiment.” “Who is going to back us up when something goes terribly wrong?” he asked.

Others spoke out against adverse reactions to vaccines suffered by their own children. Dr. Stephen Petteruti, for example, said his stepson suffered temporary blindness after a vaccination, which has still not been investigated, *The Valley Breeze* reported. Local mother Michelle Rennick, meanwhile, described as many as 10 different diseases that afflicted her daughter after receiving the controversial HPV vaccine. Taxpayers have paid out [around \\$3 billion to victims of vaccines or their families, because U.S. lawmakers granted vaccine makers immunity](#) from having to pay damages owing to injuries or deaths caused by their products.

On August 25, the Coventry School Committee unanimously adopted a [resolution](#) by committee member James Pierson opposing the mandate. Citing medical ethics on informed consent and more than a dozen lawmakers who are opposed to the mandate, at least one of whom was in attendance, the resolution calls on Democrat Governor Gina Raimondo and health bureaucrats to reverse the decree. Only one other state and the District of Columbia have similar mandates, the resolution added. [Every parent who spoke at the Coventry meeting was opposed to the mandate](#). Other local school authorities are expected to follow suit.

State health bureaucrats, though, citing the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC), claim that the HPV vaccine they mandated is safe and will protect the young children from the Human Papilloma Virus. “The bottom line is that HPV is the most sexually transmitted disease in the U.S.” argued Tricia Washburn, chief of the immunization office at the Rhode Island Department of Health, last month. “We are interested in protecting the public health. We feel it shouldn’t be treated any differently than any of the other vaccines recommended by the CDC.”

Of course, the CDC is currently facing its own vaccine-related scandals after a whistleblower, senior CDC epidemiologist Dr. William Thompson, revealed that he helped the federal agency unlawfully conceal data linking the MMR vaccine to drastically increased rates of autism — especially in black children. Doctors and U.S. lawmakers are demanding a formal investigation of the dangerous fraud, and accountability for those responsible for the deception. But so far, nothing has been done.

Unlike most states, Rhode Island currently mandates all CDC-“recommended” vaccines for children in schools. But nationwide, concerns about the “recommendations” are spreading like wildfire — particularly considering that the number of “recommended” vaccines from the unconstitutional bureaucracy has ballooned from 10 shots before age six in 1983 to almost 40 before age six today.

In response to the growing uproar against the HPV mandate in Rhode Island, health bureaucrats emphasized that parents could still use legally protected religious or medical exemptions to opt their children out of the vaccine. But critics such as Gardiner say that is not acceptable. “The parents have



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the right to make the choice for their family, and if they feel it is not appropriate for their family, they should be able to simply say no,” she said, adding that the religious exemptions are tracked within the educational system. The mandate applies to children going into seventh grade in both government and private schools.

Some lawmakers, though, are planning a legislative counter-attack that could rein in the bureaucracy and its trampling of parental rights. Republican State Representative Justin Price, for instance, vowed to file legislation that will “put the power back in parents’ hands.” He also wants to add a philosophical exemption that would allow more parents to opt out their children, in addition to requiring that parents receive more information on the vaccines to assist in obtaining informed consent.

Another lawmaker, State Representative Sherry Roberts, accused the health department of going too far. “This disease is not an airborne contagion that puts students in the classroom at risk,” she said in a statement quoted in media reports. “The decision to vaccinate 11-year olds against a sexually transmitted disease should be left to the parents and legal guardians of those children.” Activists also vowed to push for legislation entirely removing the power of state health officials to mandate vaccines.

As *The New American* magazine has been [reporting for years](#), countless doctors and health professionals around the world have [long questioned both the safety and efficacy of vaccines](#). Even the package inserts warn of potentially fatal and debilitating reactions to the shots’ contents, some of which are manufactured using aborted babies. Either way, though, the decision on whether or not to vaccinate children must remain with parents and doctors — not bureaucrats. Anything less is an assault on medical ethics, liberty, parental rights, and common sense.

Photo of Gardasil vaccine and box: [Jan Christian](#)

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