SUPPORT

Repeal Religious Vaccination Exemption
S.2994 (Hoylman)/A.2371 (Dinowitz)

THE COUNCIL SUPPORTS repealing the religious vaccination exemption.

The Council supports legislation that would eliminate the ability of parents or guardians to exempt their children from state-mandated vaccination requirements.

Current law requires principals to decide whether an individual requesting a religious vaccination actually has a genuine and sincere religious belief. Principals have the authority to deny the exemption request. Most of our leaders agree it is not appropriate for a school official to be placed in the position of having to either determine whether a religious vaccination request is valid. But that is what the current law and regulations essentially require.

We asked a cross-section of superintendents across the state whether religious vaccinations exemptions should be explicitly honored without any validations or whether the exemption should be repealed. The overwhelming majority of superintendents whom we asked favored repeal.

We do not take the stance with ease or with any lack of respect for individuals with a sincerely held religious belief against vaccinations. Nor have we arrived at this conclusion lightly or without debate. However, school districts are now struggling to deal with an illness that was effectively eliminated from the country two decades ago. This is unacceptable.

Superintendents are also concerned about the well-being of their students who have medical exemptions from vaccines. Those student’s health is compromised in communities with growing unvaccinated populations. This is an unacceptable situation.

With the general health well-being of thousands of students with medical exemptions and children too young to be vaccinated at risk, we must call for the elimination of the religious vaccination.

The Council supports this legislation and urges its approval.