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**Testimony in Support of
House Bill 7199 An Act Concerning Immunizations Against The Meningococcal Virus
and Human Papillomavirus
Public Health Committee
March 13, 2019**

Senator Abrams, Representative Steinberg and members of the Public Health Committee, on behalf of the physicians and physicians in training of the Connecticut State Medical Society (CSMS), thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony to you today in support of House Bill 7199 An Act Concerning Immunizations Against The Meningococcal Virus and Human Papillomavirus.

Before going further we would like to correct an error in the title of the bill. The meningococcal organism is a bacterium and not a virus.

Vaccination has been very much in the news lately and for appropriate reasons. Declining immunization rates have led to outbreaks of measles in California, Washington, Oregon and even in our neighboring state, New York. CSMS supports the concept of mandatory vaccinations to protect the population at large by achieving immunization rates that prevent the transmission of highly infectious diseases like measles. High immunization rates in states like Connecticut have been so successful in reducing the transmission of viral and bacterial diseases that few in this room, including the physicians, have ever seen an active case of polio, diphtheria or measles. High immunization rates are particularly important in protecting the members of our society who for medical and/or religious reasons cannot or will not undergo vaccination.

Bacterial meningitis caused by the meningococcal bacterium is not a common disease; there are only about 2,600 cases a year in the United States, due in large part to the availability of an effective vaccine. Meningococcal meningitis is, however, a rapidly destructive disease with a mortality rate of 10-20% even with treatment. Among those who survive 10% will be left with lifelong deficits including loss of limbs, hearing and significant brain damage. Mandatory meningococcal vaccination as proposed in House Bill 7199 would provide added assurance that this devastating disease is seldom seen.

The human papillomavirus is widely circulated, 40% of Americans between the ages of 18 and 59 have been infected and those infected with high risk strains have substantially increased risk for developing cervical cancer, penile cancer, anal cancer and cancer of head and neck. Approximately 40,000 cases a year are attributed to these strains, nearly all of which are protected against through the use of the available HPV vaccines. While Connecticut has achieved high rates of vaccination for the common childhood transmissible diseases, as high as 96% for tetanus-diphtheria-pertussis, we remain on the low side for HPV with rates of only 63.5% for girls and 52.7% for boys. Increasing vaccination rates through mandatory school entrance requirements would boost immunity and essentially eliminate the deadly and disfiguring effects of HPV.

We urge the Committee to support House Bill 7199.