School Vaccination Policy in Tennessee

A Historical Case Study in Protecting Public Health and Safeguarding the Future

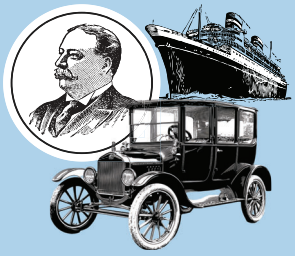


Emily Delikat, MPH, CPH

Disclosure: The views expressed in this presentation are my own and are presented in my role as Director of Tennessee Families for Vaccines. They do not necessarily reflect the views of Vanderbilt University Medical Center, the Emerging Infections Program, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, or affiliated institutions.



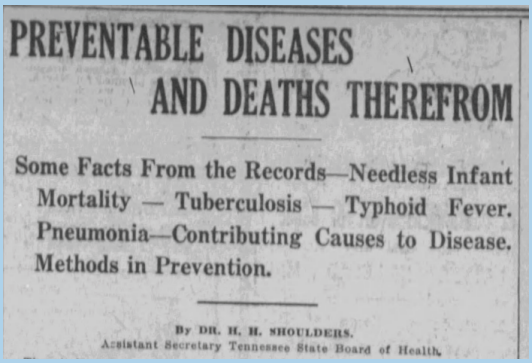
Measles became a nationally notifiable disease.[1]



In the first decade of reporting,

6000 deaths

were reported each year!



PREVENTABLE DISEASES AND DEATHS THEREFROM

Some Facts From the Records—Needless Infant Mortality — Tuberculosis — Typhoid Fever. Pneumonia—Contributing Causes to Disease. Methods in Prevention.

By DR. H. H. SHOULDERS.
Assistant Secretary Tennessee State Board of Health.

Source: H. H. Shoulders, Nashville Banner, Sept. 28, 1912, p. 3 (via Newspapers.com).

This will doubtless be a surprise to some, and it is really surprising when we think of it that smallpox should have caused any deaths at all. This disease [Smallpox], which was not long ago one of the greatest scourges of humanity, has now been conquered. It is needless to say that vaccination has been the means. **All the large cities of Tennessee, and some of the smaller ones, now require a certificate of vaccination before a child is allowed to enter the schools...When vaccination is more generally adopted the disease will become a mere matter of history.**

...It is an old, old story, heard over and over again, that a child had measles or whooping cough, and has been in ill health ever since. Unfortunately there is no means of prevention to be practiced, save that of preventing contact with an individual suffering from the disease. School authorities, health authorities and parents, co-operating, could render these diseases far less frequent or even exterminate them entirely.

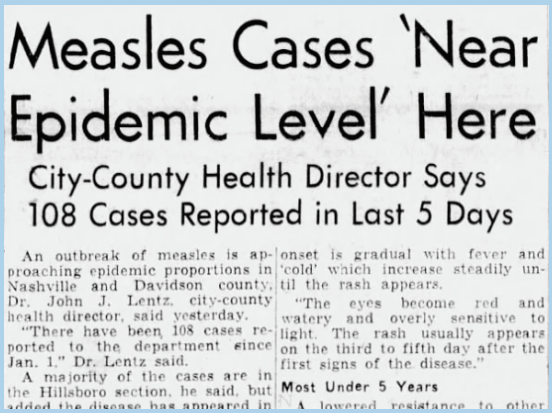
... **as soon as this knowledge has been properly spread it will essentially follow that the work will be done.**

When the fact that it is possible and practicable to reduce our death rate one half is really known, and the proper effort has been put forth toward the accomplishment of this great end, our people will necessarily be a more frugal and happier people, and our state as a place in which to live an even more inviting one. [2]



Yearly Estimates in the United States:

- **Infections: 3 to 4 million people**
  - **Deaths: 400 to 500 people**
  - **Hospitalizations: 48,000**
  - **Cases of Encephalitis (brain swelling): 1,000**



Measles Cases 'Near Epidemic Level' Here

City-County Health Director Says 108 Cases Reported in Last 5 Days

An outbreak of measles is approaching epidemic proportions in Nashville and Davidson county, Dr. John J. Lentz, city-county health director, said yesterday.

"There have been 108 cases reported to the department since Jan. 1," Dr. Lentz said.

A majority of the cases are in the Hillsboro section, he said, but added the disease has appeared in

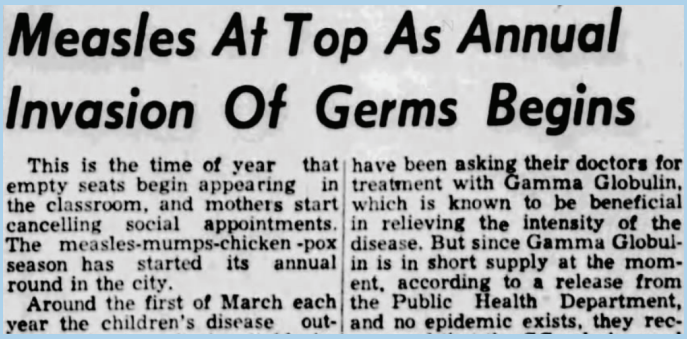
onset is gradual with fever and 'cold' which increase steadily until the rash appears.

"The eyes become red and watery and overly sensitive to light. The rash usually appears on the third to fifth day after the first signs of the disease."

Most Under 5 Years

A lowered resistance to other

The Tennessean, January 6, 1954, Page 1. via Newspapers.com



Measles At Top As Annual Invasion Of Germs Begins

This is the time of year that empty seats begin appearing in the classroom, and mothers start cancelling social appointments. The measles-mumps-chicken-pox season has started its annual round in the city.

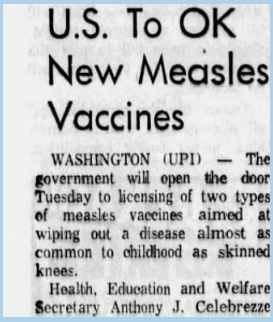
Around the first of March each year the children's disease out-

have been asking their doctors for treatment with Gamma Globulin, which is known to be beneficial in relieving the intensity of the disease. But since Gamma Globulin is in short supply at the moment, according to a release from the Public Health Department, and no epidemic exists, they rec-

Source: The Oak Ridger, March 5, 1954, Page 1. via Newspapers.com



The first measles vaccine was approved in 1963, and the first national vaccination campaign followed in 1966.

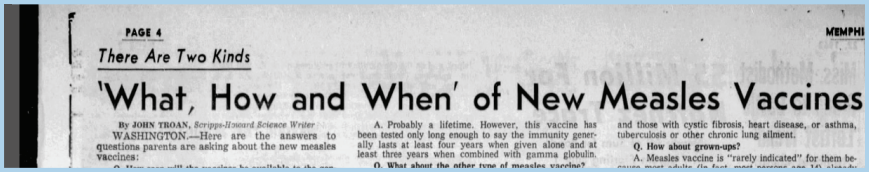


U.S. To OK New Measles Vaccines

WASHINGTON (UPI) — The government will open the door Tuesday to licensing of two types of measles vaccines aimed at wiping out a disease almost as common to childhood as skinned knees.

Health, Education and Welfare Secretary Anthony J. Celebrezze

Bristol Herald Courier, March 19, 1963, Page 7. via Newspapers.com



PAGE 4 MEMPHI

There Are Two Kinds

'What, How and When' of New Measles Vaccines

By JOHN TROAN, Scripps-Howard Science Writer

WASHINGTON.—Here are the answers to questions parents are asking about the new measles vaccines:

A. Probably a lifetime. However, this vaccine has been tested only long enough to say the immunity generally lasts at least four years when given alone and at least three years when combined with gamma globulin.

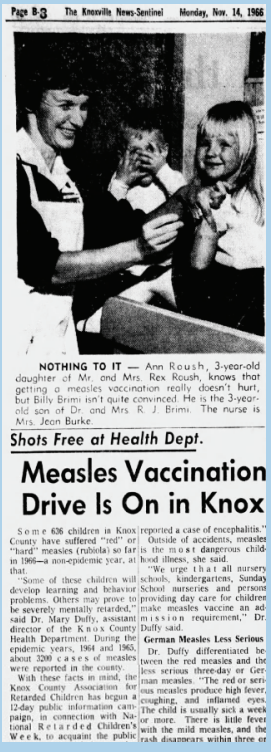
and those with cystic fibrosis, heart disease, or asthma, tuberculosis or other chronic lung ailment.

Q. How about grown-ups?

A. Measles vaccine is "rarely indicated" for them be-

The Memphis Press-Scimitar, March 22, 1963, Page 4. via Newspapers.com

Within two years, measles incidence in the US had decreased by more than 90% compared with pre vaccine-era levels.



Page B-3 The Knoxville News-Sentinel Monday, Nov. 14, 1966

NOTHING TO IT — Ann Roush, 3-year-old daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Rex Roush, knows that getting a measles vaccination really doesn't hurt, but Billy Brimi isn't quite convinced. He is the 3-year-old son of Dr. and Mrs. R. J. Brimi. The nurse is Mrs. Jean Burke.

Shots Free at Health Dept.

Measles Vaccination Drive Is On in Knox

Some 636 children in Knox County have suffered "red" or "hard" measles (rubeola) so far in 1966—a non-epidemic year, at that.

"Some of these children will develop learning and behavior problems. Others may prove to be severely mentally retarded," said Dr. Mary Duffy, assistant director of the Knox County Health Department. During the epidemic years, 1964 and 1965, about 3200 cases of measles were reported in the county.

With these facts in mind, the Knox County Association for Retarded Children has begun a 12-day public information campaign, in connection with National Retarded Children's Week, to acquaint the public

reported a case of encephalitis." Outside of accidents, measles is the most dangerous childhood illness, she said.

"We urge that all nursery schools, kindergartens, Sunday School nurseries and persons providing day care for children make measles vaccine an admission requirement," Dr. Duffy said.

German Measles Less Serious

Dr. Duffy differentiated between the red measles and the less serious three-day or German measles. "The red or serious measles produce high fever, coughing, and inflamed eyes. The child is usually sick a week or more. There is little fever with the mild measles, and the rash disappears within three or

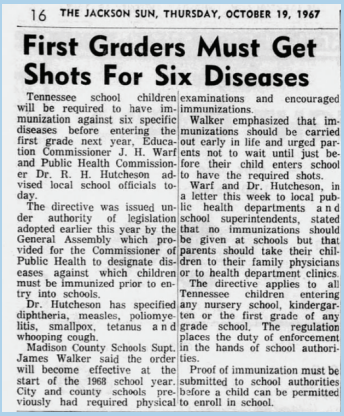
The Knoxville News-Sentinel, November 14, 1966, Page 22. via Newspapers.com



In 1967, the Tennessee General Assembly enacted the state's first school vaccine requirements for children (K-1) entering school.

Physicians could grant medical exemptions when necessary.

Unless there was an epidemic or immediate threat, parents could request a religious exemption if they were members of a "well-recognized religious denomination whose teachings include reliance on prayer or spiritual means alone for healing."



16 THE JACKSON SUN, THURSDAY, OCTOBER 19, 1967

First Graders Must Get Shots For Six Diseases

Tennessee school children will be required to have immunization against six specific diseases before entering the first grade next year, Education Commissioner J. H. Warf and Public Health Commissioner Dr. R. H. Hutcheson advised local school officials today.

The directive was issued under authority of legislation adopted earlier this year by the General Assembly which provided for the Commissioner of Public Health to designate diseases against which children must be immunized prior to entry into schools.

Dr. Hutcheson has specified diphtheria, measles, poliomyelitis, smallpox, tetanus and whooping cough.

Madison County Schools Supt. James Walker said the order will become effective at the start of the 1968 school year. City and county schools previously had required physical examinations and encouraged immunizations.

Walker emphasized that immunizations should be carried out early in life and urged parents not to wait until just before their child enters school to have the required shots.

Warf and Dr. Hutcheson, in a letter this week to local public health departments and school superintendents, stated that no immunizations should be given at schools but that parents should take their children to their family physicians or to health department clinics.

The directive applies to all Tennessee children entering any nursery school, kindergarten or the first grade of any grade school. The regulation places the duty of enforcement in the hands of school authorities.

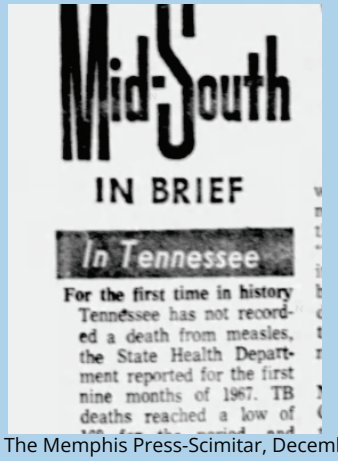
Proof of immunization must be submitted to school authorities before a child can be permitted to enroll in school.

The Jackson Sun, October 19, 1967, Page 16. via Newspapers.com



The Memphis Press-Scimitar, January 5, 1967, Page 28. via Newspapers.com





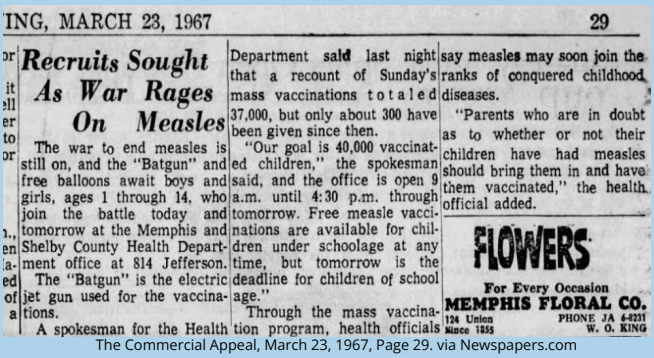
Mid-South IN BRIEF

In Tennessee

For the first time in history Tennessee has not recorded a death from measles, the State Health Department reported for the first nine months of 1967. TB deaths reached a low of

The Memphis Press-Scimitar, December 12, 1967, Page 14. via Newspapers.com

Tennessee was a proud leader in the campaign to eradicate disease.



ING, MARCH 23, 1967 29

Recruits Sought As War Rages On Measles

The war to end measles is still on, and the "Batgun" and free balloons await boys and girls, ages 1 through 14, who join the battle today and tomorrow at the Memphis and Shelby County Health Department office at 814 Jefferson.

The "Batgun" is the electric jet gun used for the vaccinations.

A spokesman for the Health Department said last night that a recount of Sunday's mass vaccinations totaled 37,000, but only about 300 have been given since then.

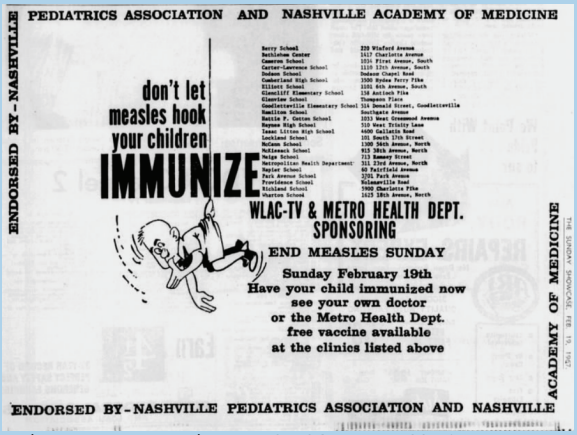
"Our goal is 40,000 vaccinated children," the spokesman said, and the office is open 9 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. through tomorrow. Free measle vaccinations are available for children under schoolage at any time, but tomorrow is the deadline for children of school age."

Through the mass vaccination program, health officials say measles may soon join the ranks of conquered childhood diseases.

"Parents who are in doubt as to whether or not their children have had measles should bring them in and have them vaccinated," the health official added.

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MEMPHIS FLORAL CO.
124 Union PHONE JA 6-6231
Since 1855 W. O. KING

The Commercial Appeal, March 23, 1967, Page 29. via Newspapers.com



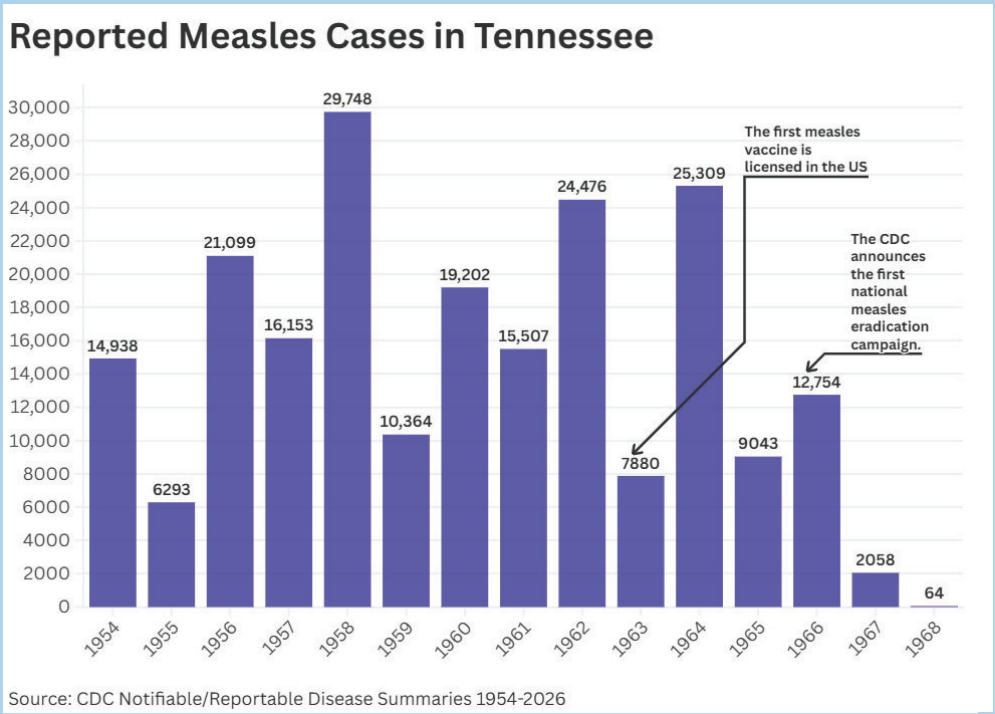
The Tennessean, February 19, 1967, Page 132. via Newspapers.com



1960s

"states that had school vaccination laws for measles vaccine had measles incidence rates 40% to 51% lower than states without such laws." [4]

***Law in Public Health Practice* by Kevin Malone and Alan Hinman**



Source: CDC Notifiable/Reportable Disease Summaries 1954-2026



1970s

By 1977, vaccination rates were declining.

President Jimmy Carter began the National Childhood Immunization Program. The goal of the initiative was for at least 90% of American children to be immunized by 1979. Many states reviewed their immunization laws and began finding better ways to enforce them.



JIMMY CARTER 5

39th President of the United States: 1977 - 1981

Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies on the Childhood Immunization Program

April 11, 1977

Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies

Subject: Childhood Immunization Program

As you may know, approximately 20 million of the Nation's children under the age of 15 are not fully protected from preventable childhood diseases. At my request, the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare will initiate this week a continuing, high-visibility program and public information campaign to promote desirable childhood immunization. Our goal over the next two years is to reduce as much as humanly possible the numbers of youngsters without medical protection against many major childhood afflictions.

I want each of you to join in this nationwide initiative by taking direct and widespread actions to stress the very great importance of childhood immunization to all federal employees and to initiate effective, agency-wide information programs on how parents can obtain the needed immunizations for their children. Secretary Califano will send to you a packet containing the details of our nationwide program and a memorandum that will highlight any aspects of direct interest and concern to those of us in federal service.

I sincerely believe this single measure of preventive health care can and will affect the future lives and well-being of countless numbers of the Nation's children. I hope each of you will do what you can personally to inform those with whom you work and the Nation's citizens about it. At my request, Mr. Califano will periodically keep us all informed of the progress of this key health initiative and of the additional measures we each may take to assure its success.



More cases of measles were reported in Tennessee in 1977 than at any time since 1971. By mid-1978, more cases of measles were reported than in all of 1977. 84% of the reported cases were predominantly among school-age children 5 years of age and older, and 13% of children under the age of 14 were inadequately immunized.



New Immunization Law

Implementation of the new state law requiring that children attending Tennessee schools be legally immunized has been accomplished with a high degree of success, according to Public Health Commissioner Eugene W. Fowinkle.

Fowinkle stated that the Tennessee Department of Public Health will conduct school audits in October to determine the degree to which implementation has taken place. Findings of the audit will be made public. While the overall response across the state has apparently been good," Fowinkle said, "there are some indications that problems do exist in certain school systems." Following the audits, decisions will then be made adequately immunized against childhood diseases, according to state immunization staff.

According to state statistics, the need for a change in the law to include all students rather than only those entering school is shown by the incidence of red measles in Tennessee in the last several years. For example, in 1977, more cases of measles were reported than at any time since 1971; and more measles were reported by midyear 1978 than in all of 1977. In 1977 84% of the cases were in children five and older or basically school age children. 68% were in children 10+ year of age. The same pattern is true for several yeaars. This group who are 10+ law.

Many groups have been involved in both the promotional effort and the implementation of the new law. Physicians, parents, school officials, Tennessee Congress of Parents & Teachers, the Governor's Immunization Action Committee, and local health departments have all responded well to the immunization initiative.

"Immunization against major childhood diseases is an important preventive health measure for the children in Tennessee," Commissioner Fowinkle said. "With full and careful implementation of this law, we should see an end to the serious illness and permanent damage that can result when our children are infected by these

After much discussion and deliberation, Tennessee legislators decided that the 1967 law "was inadequate because it lacked sufficient sanction."

In 1978, almost 10 years after first requiring school vaccinations, the Tennessee General Assembly unanimously passed "one of the most compulsory school immunization laws in the nation."

Stewart-Houston Times, October 10, 1978, Page 13. via Newspapers.com

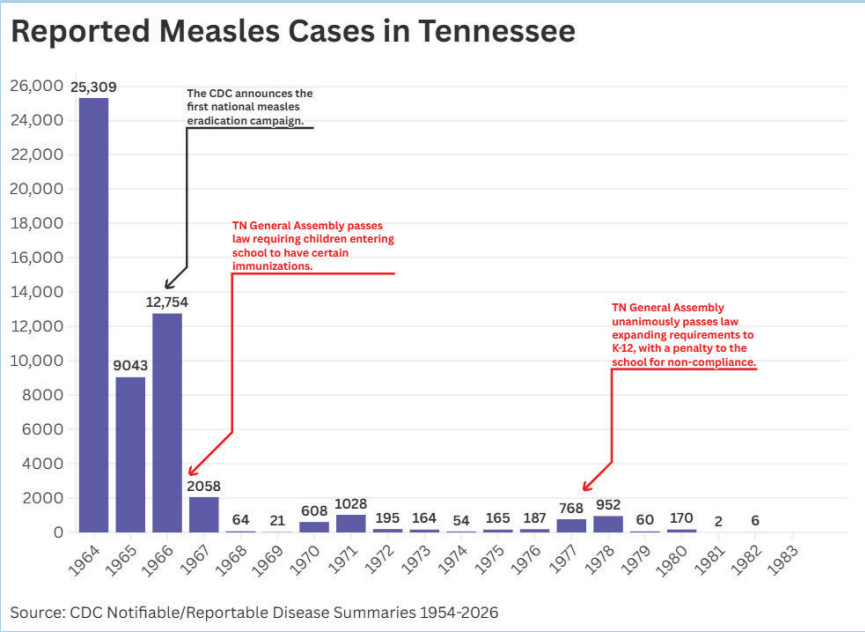


Public Chapter 922 was enacted on April 27, 1977 (effective July 1)

To begin the school year, all children would be required to have received vaccines for diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, polio, measles, and rubella

1. Extends coverage to all children attending State supported schools, grades kindergarten through 12. The earlier law applied only to those entering school for the first time.

2. Imposes a penalty on the school system for noncompliance. Any child not legally immunized cannot be counted in the average daily attendance, which was the basis for the distribution of state funds.



Source: CDC Notifiable/Reportable Disease Summaries 1954-2026



1970s

Monumental Challenges led to Monumental Partnerships and Monumental Successes

Responsibilities:

- **Tennessee State Department of Health**
  - **determine which vaccines would be required**
  - **spread the word about the requirements**
  - **ensure adequate staffing of nurses and administrators**
  - **ensure adequate funding and supply**
- **Tennessee State Department of Education**
  - **enforcing the legislation**
  - **maintaining the immunization records of all K-12 public school children (over 840,000 in 1978)**
- **Parents**
  - **have their children immunized**

"Tennessee is a leader in efforts to control dangerous childhood diseases like diphtheria, whooping cough and measles, and we will work together with the school systems, public health agencies, physicians and concerned communities to insure that this new law is implemented smoothly for the benefit of our children." Sam Ingram - Tennessee Commissioner of Education [7]



1970s

Monumental Challenges led to Monumental Partnerships and Monumental Successes

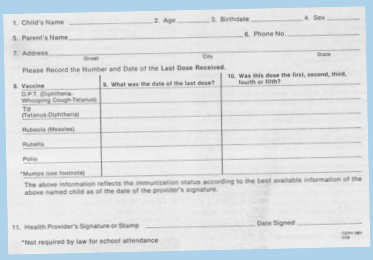
"Protecting our children against needless disease is one of the most valuable efforts our communities can undertake."

Mrs. Betty Lis - State PTA president and charman of the Governors Immunization Action Committee

Vital Partners

- **Immunization Action Committee - Governor Appointed**
  - **TN Congress of Parents and Teachers**
  - **TN Chapter of the American Red Cross**
  - **TN Education Association.**
  - **TN PTA**
  - **TN Department of Health**
  - **TN Department of Education**
- **News Media**
- **Physicians and Nurses**
- **School Boards**
- **School Administrators**
- **Parents**
- **Students**





1. Child's Name ____ 2. Age ____ 3. Birthdate ____ 4. Sex ____
5. Parent's Name ____ 6. Phone No. ____
7. Address ____ Street ____ City ____ State ____
Please Record the Number and Date of the Last Dose Received.

8. Vaccine	9. What was the date of the last dose?	10. Was this dose the first, second, third, fourth or fifth?
D.P.T. (Diphtheria-Whooping Cough-Tetanus)		
Td (Tetanus-Diphtheria)		
Rubeola (Measles)		
Rubella		
Polio		
*Mumps (see footnote)		

The above information reflects the immunization status according to the best available information of the above named child as of the date of the provider's signature.

11. Health Provider's Signature or Stamp ____ Date Signed ____
*Not required by law for school attendance

Fowinkle, E W et al. (1981). A compulsory school immunization program in Tennessee.Public Health Rep. 96(1):61-66.



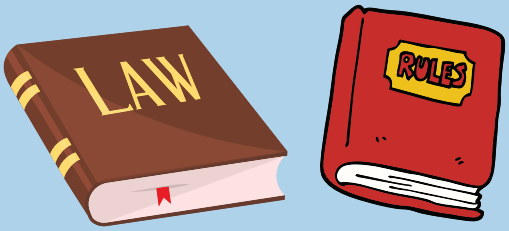
An audit at the end of the 1978-1979 school year showed that



- 95.3% of all K-12 students in Tennessee public schools were immunized
- Only 0.2% of parents requested medical or religious exemptions. [6]

"an analysis of states with the highest and lowest incidences of measles in 1979–1980 found that states with the lowest incidence rates were significantly more likely to have laws covering the entire school population ... and more likely to be strictly enforcing the laws."

Malone, Kevin M., and Alan R. Hinman, 'Vaccination Mandates: The Public Health Imperative and Individual Rights', in Richard A. Goodman, and others (eds), Law in Public Health Practice, 2nd edn (New York, 2007; online edn, Oxford Academic, 1 Sept. 2009). [4]



statutory clarity

+



scientific evidence



cross-sector implementation





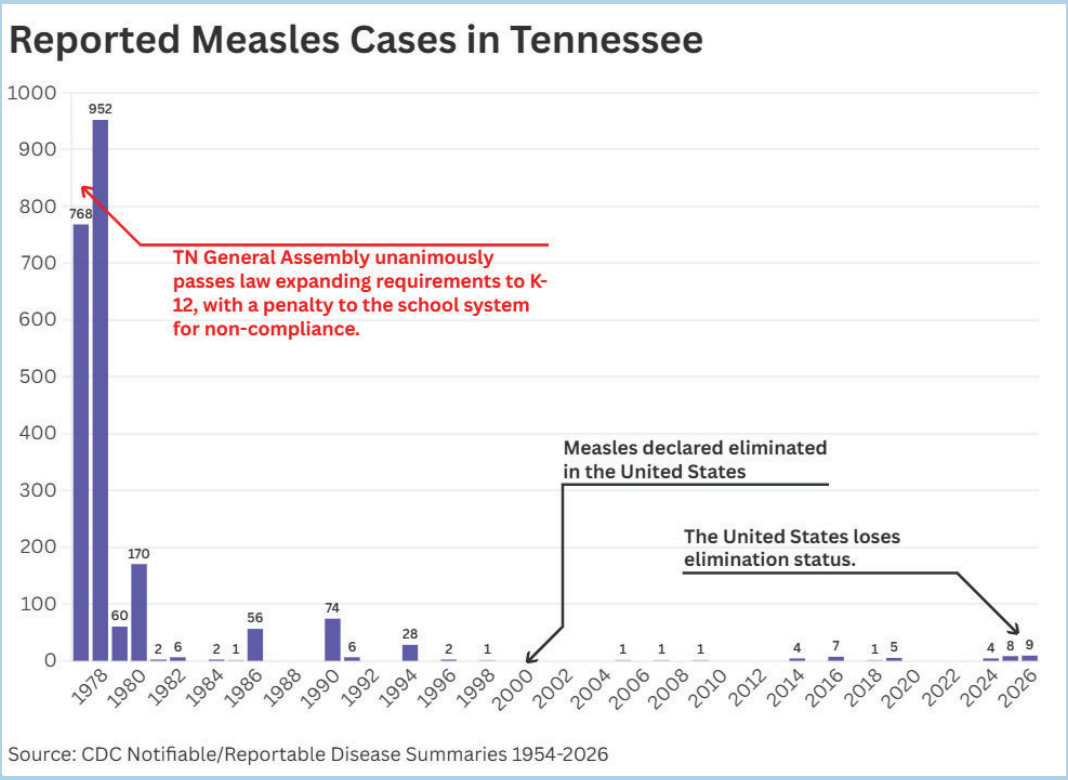
strong, evidence-based public health policies and protections

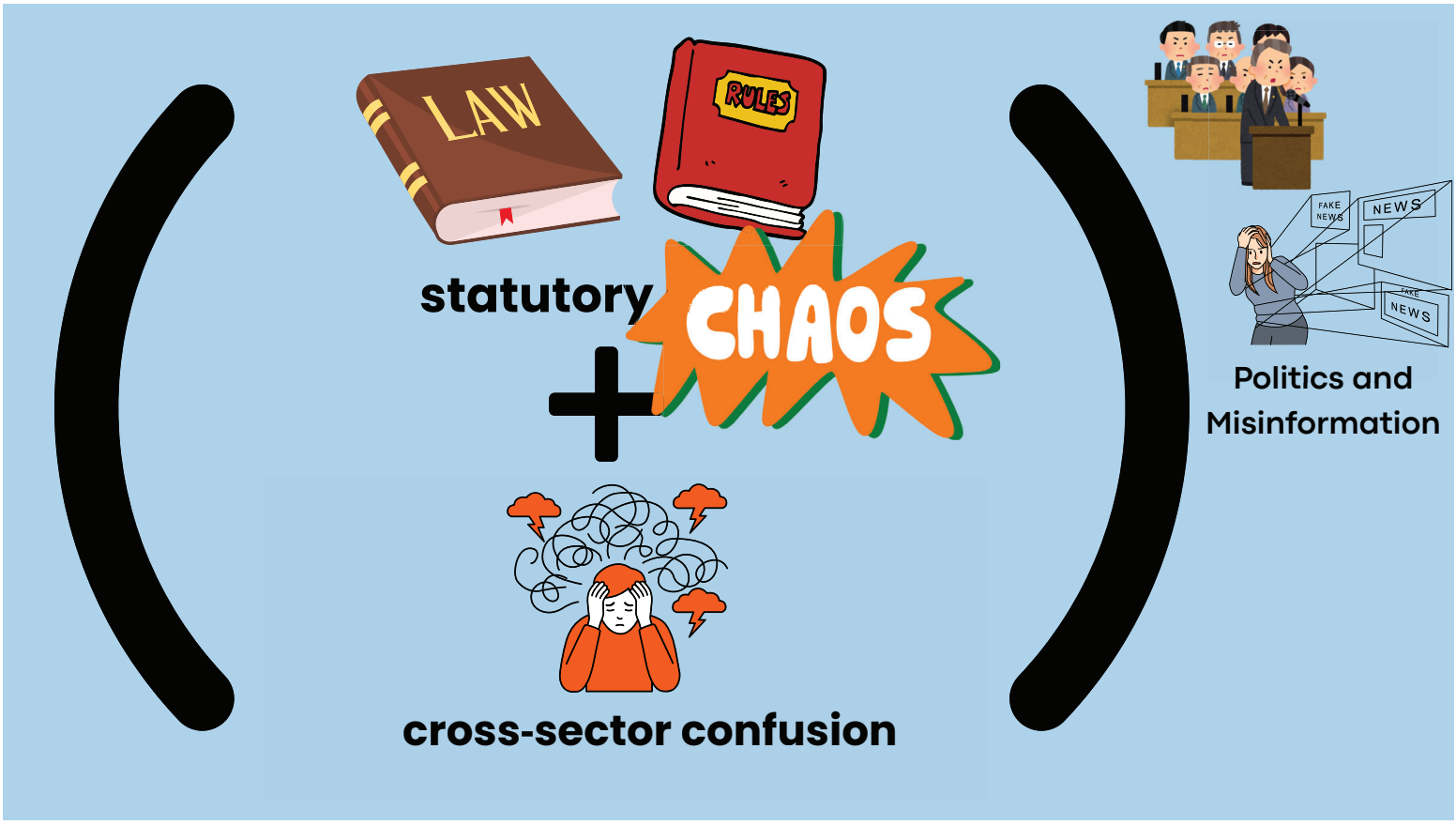
a healthier Tennessee

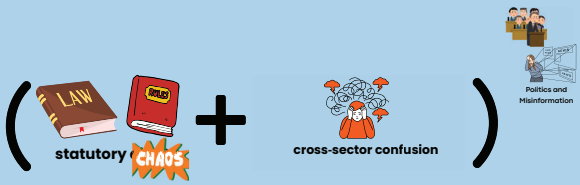


The **commissioner of health** is authorized to designate **which vaccines (except Covid-19) are required** and is **also in charge of rules and regulations** involved in carrying out the requirements.

Unless there is an epidemic, except COVID-19, parents may file an exemption due to religious tenants and practices.







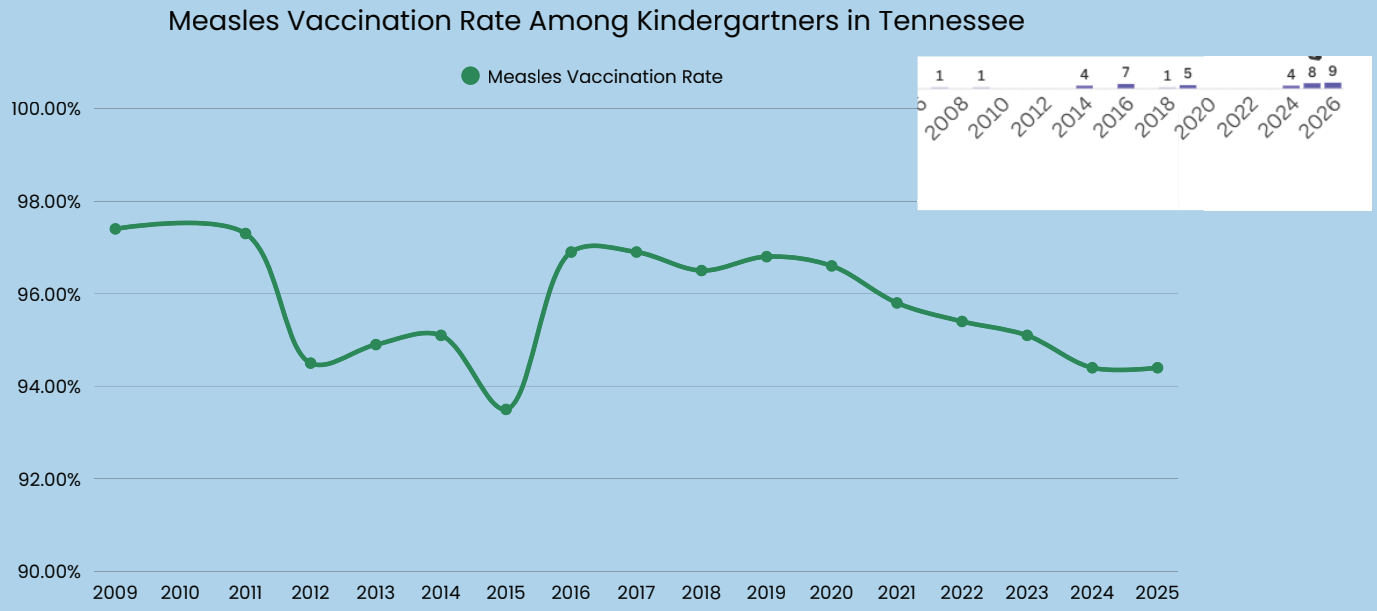


weak public health policies and broken protection based on politics and misinformation



a sicker Tennessee

Tennessee kindergarten vaccination coverage has declined while measles has re-emerged.

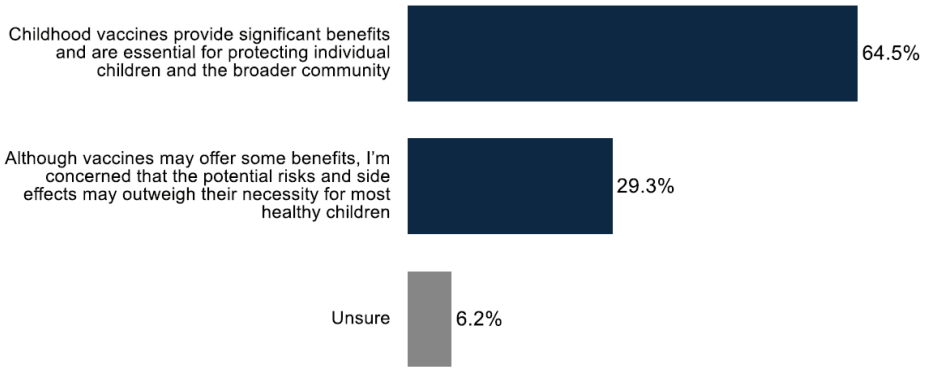




Tennessee policies reflect the culture and values of Tennesseans

Tennessee Statewide Polling

Two-thirds of voters believe childhood vaccines provide significant benefits and are essential – over double the number who believe vaccines may offer some benefits but are concerned about potential risks and side effects (29%).

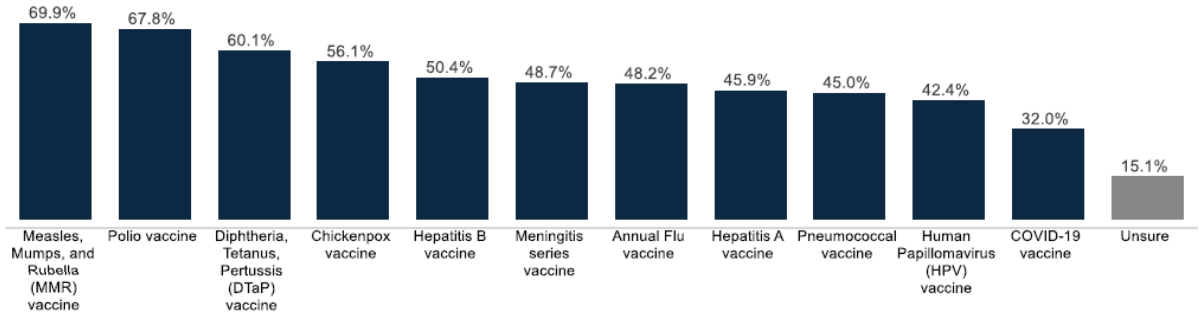




Tennessee Statewide Polling

Participants were asked "Thinking about common vaccines, which of the following do you believe have benefits that outweigh the risks?"

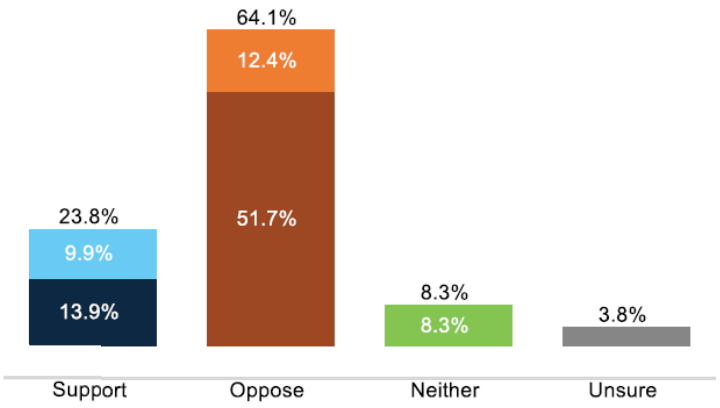
- Voters believe the risks outweigh the benefits most with MMR vaccines (70%), polio vaccine (68%), DTaP vaccine (60%), and the chickenpox vaccine (56%).
  - Like their opinion on vaccines not being essential, **only 50% of younger Republican women say MMR's benefits outweigh the risks.**
- Other common vaccines are seen as beneficial to between 40-50% of voters, but the Covid vaccine is notably lower at 32%.





Tennessee Statewide Polling

Most voters in Tennessee oppose the state adopting a similar policy as Florida to eliminate all statewide vaccine requirements.



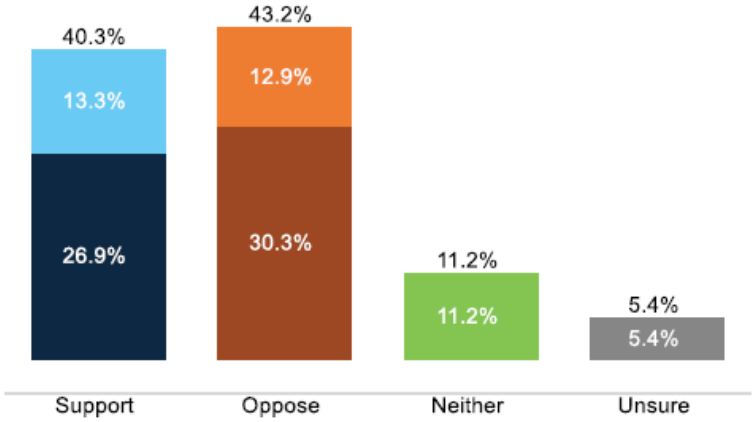


- Opposition is strongest among women, voters age 55+, Black voters, college-educated voters, Independents, and Democrats.
- Significant work needs to be done with **Republican voters under the age of 55, 50% of whom support ending vaccine requirements.**

Tennessee Statewide Polling

40% of voters support allowing religious and personal belief exemptions for school-entry vaccination requirements (43% oppose).

- The issue of exemptions is highly contested:
  - men are split
  - Republicans support +22,
  - Independents are split
  - Democrats oppose +52.



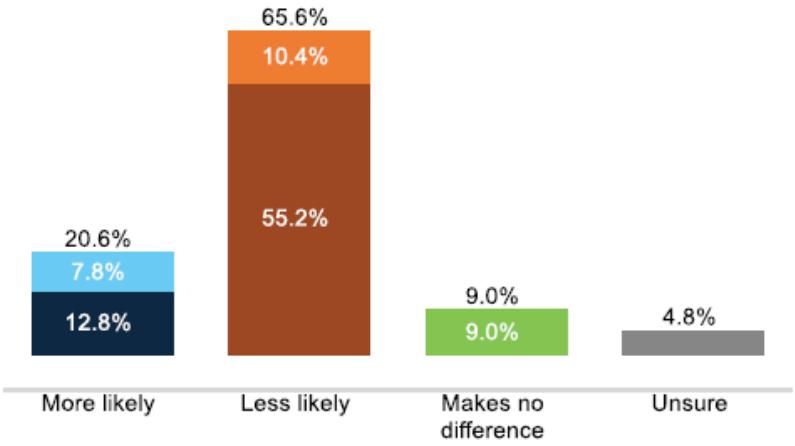


Tennessee Statewide Polling

A whopping 66% of voters would be less likely to support their state legislator if they voted to end all vaccine requirements statewide in Tennessee. 55% would be much less likely.

- This includes **a nearly majority of Republicans** (47% less likely).
  - 4/4 Republicans are +17 less likely (27% more likely, 44% less likely) to support a lawmaker who advocates for ending vaccine requirements. This is an issue that could crush lawmakers in competitive districts.
  - Swing voters are +45 opposed to ending vaccine requirements.



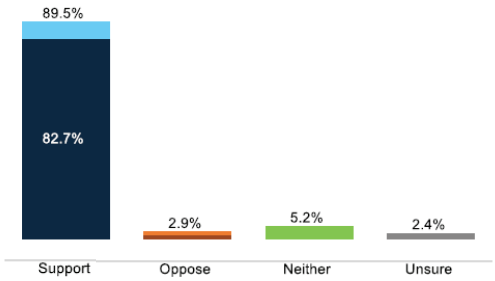


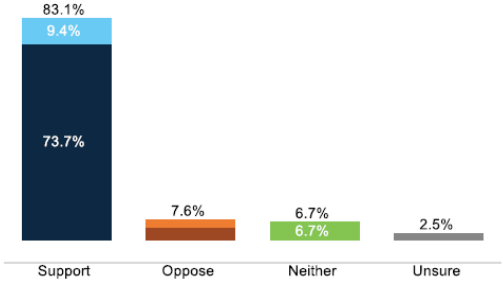
Tennessee Statewide Polling

Voters show strong support for:

- Policies that **ensure vaccines are easily available at local pharmacies and fully covered by insurance** (90% support).
- **Efforts to increase access and insurance coverage for vaccines** so that all children can meet school vaccination requirements (83% support).





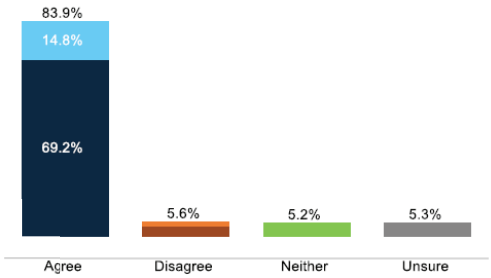


Tennessee Statewide Polling

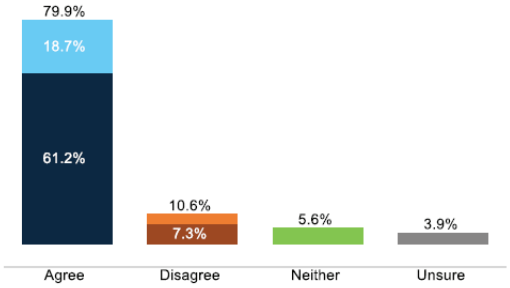
There is near universal agreement that:

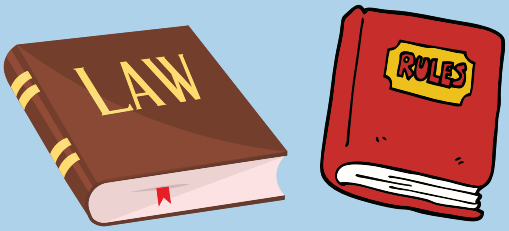
- The **process for approving vaccines should be grounded in scientific evidence and designed to support innovation** that protects individuals and families (84% agree).





- Vaccine **recommendations should be guided by physicians, scientists, and public health experts** trained to evaluate vaccine risks and benefits (80% agree).





statutory clarity

+



scientific evidence



cross-sector implementation

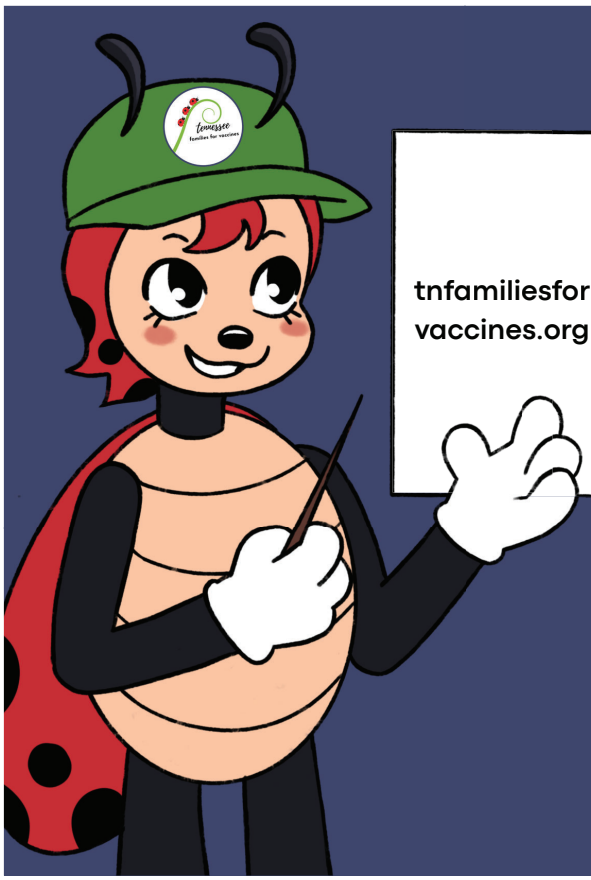
statutory clarity + cross-sector implementation) scientific evidence

=



strong, evidence-based public health policies and protections

→ a healthier Tennessee



tnfamiliesforvaccines.org

tennessee families for vaccines

Thank you!

emily@tnfamiliesforvaccines.org



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