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Dr. Neil Pedersen, Superintendent
Lincoln Center
750 Merritt Mill Road
Chapel Hill, NC 27516

By E-mail and U.S. Mail
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CC: CHCCS School Board
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Dear Dr. Pedersen,

I read with great interest recently your blog entry announcing a contest that rewards adolescent students with the chance to get I-pods or a laptop for getting vaccinated. However, while I applaud the underlying intent, the contest raises serious policy concerns:

1. The Contest discriminates against children who cannot participate due to religious and medical exemptions to immunizations. Those children are unfairly excluded for reasons beyond their control;
2. It erroneously places the incentive to vaccinate on children. The decision to vaccinate or not is entirely up to parents. The contest rewards the wrong persons—children who do not control the vaccination decision;
3. It amounts to state endorsement of one choice from among two or more legitimate options for parents. Parents may refuse mandatory vaccines for medical and religious reasons, and non-mandatory vaccines for medical, religious or personal reasons. These are all legitimate options. Public schools should not take sides;
4. It amounts to state endorsement of private industry by encouraging the only choice from among two or more choices that supports pharmaceutical profits. Public schools should not endorse private industry in personal, parental discretionary matters.

Enforcement authority for mandatory vaccination is assigned by law to local health departments. As for non-mandatory vaccines, since the vaccines themselves carry a risk of permanent injury and death—the federal Vaccine Injury Compensation Program has paid out over \$2 billion to vaccine victims and their families to date¹—student vaccination decisions are serious ones that should remain solely in the hands of parents. Public schools should not intrude into this private domain or endorse a position that carries a risk of permanent disability and death. The school district should limit its involvement with vaccines to its legal obligation to document and report student vaccination and exemption status as it pertains to school enrollment.

Dr. Pedersen, did you know that the U.S. is the most highly vaccinated nation in the world—we mandate twice as many vaccines as the average of 30 western nations—yet we are 46th in infant mortality?² Or that Poul Thorsen, the researcher the CDC relied on for studies used to refute a vaccine-autism connection, was just indicted for 13 counts of fraud with the CDC and 9 counts of money-laundering?³ Or that former senior

pharmaceutical scientist Helen Ratajczak recently reported that documented causes of autism include vaccination?⁴ Or that 95% of infectious disease mortality decline in the 1900's preceded vaccines?⁵ Or that during U.S. Congressional hearings in 1962, Dr. Bernard Greenberg, head of the Dept. of Biostatistics for the UNC School of Public Health (and who later became the School's Dean), testified that polio increased substantially after the first mandatory polio vaccine, and that statistics were deliberately manipulated by the Public Health Service to give the opposite impression?⁶ With the utmost respect, the school district should not enter this politically sensitive and complex arena. By law, vaccination decisions and enforcement are up to parents and the health department respectively; the best school policy is to leave them there exclusively.

We are all deeply saddened by the death of the Harrison's daughter from meningococcal disease, but the school district might just as well protest adolescent vaccines in recognition of the 89 girls who have died from the Gardasil vaccine.^{7,8} For all of these reasons, this contest is bad policy and should be cancelled immediately; or, at the absolute minimum, the district should announce immediately to all school faculty, students and parents that exempt students may enter the contest—without getting vaccinated, of course—and allow their participation in a discrete manner that protects their privacy. But in any event, no such contest should ever be initiated again.

Please contact me at your earliest convenience with your decision on this matter. It not only affects my family personally—my children attend Chapel Hill schools—it is also a matter of national concern. I first learned about the contest through postings on several national Internet groups. I will personally be reporting back to those communities with your decision, as the implications reach far beyond our own school district's borders.

Sincerely,

Alan G. Phillips, Esq.

¹ National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program, Statistics Reports, III. Awards Paid, http://www.hrsa.gov/vaccinecompensation/statistics_report.htm

² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_infant_mortality_rate, (from CIA World Fact Book). For under 5 mortality, see Autism and Vaccines Around the World: Vaccine Schedules, Autism Rates, and Under 5 Mortality, at http://www.rescuepost.com/files/gr-autism_and_vaccines_world_special_report1.pdf

³ Autism and Vaccines Researcher for CDC, Indicted for Fraud and Money-Laundering, CNBC, April 14, 2011, <http://www.cnbc.com/id/42592600>.

⁴ Autism and vaccines, a surprising connection, Salem News (from CBS, London) May 2, 2011, <http://www.salem-news.com/articles/may022011/vaccine-reality-pd.php>

⁵ Harold Buttram, M.D., "Vaccine Scene 2000, Review and Update," Medical Sentinel, Vol.5 No. 2, March/April 2000.

⁶ Hearings before the Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce, House of Representatives, 87th Congress, Second Session on H.R. 10541, May 1962, at 94.

⁷ Reports of Health Concerns Following HPV Vaccination, CDC, <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccinesafety/vaccines/hpv/gardasil.html>

⁸ The Truth About Gardasil, <http://truthaboutgardasil.org/>