



September 7, 2010

Honorable Chairman Amy Klobuchar
Subcommittee on Children's Health
The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510-6300

RE: The continued use of thimerosal in vaccines administered to pregnant women, infants and children

Dear Chairwoman Klobuchar:

Honorable Chairman Klobuchar and Members of the Senate Health Committee, thank you for holding the Congressional Hearing on the State of Research on Potential Environmental Health Factors in Autism and Related Neurodevelopmental Disorders last month. This type of brave leadership is an important first step in acknowledging that environmental factors play a key role in the development of neurodevelopmental disorders like autism.

I'm writing to you today asking that the committee investigate the continued use of mercury-preserved vaccines, particularly influenza vaccines, which are recommended for pregnant women, infants and children. Mercury, including ethyl-mercury, the type of mercury used in vaccines, is a well-established neurotoxin. Studies have documented that the nervous and immune systems of developing fetuses and infants are exquisitely vulnerable to mercury. During critical windows of fetal development, exposures to even minute levels of mercury can have lifelong adverse neurological and health effects.

In 1999, as part of the FDA Modernization Act, it was discovered that infants were being exposed to mercury in excess of EPA federal safety guidelines. At that time, the FDA and CDC responded, stating that thimerosal would be phased out of all vaccines as rapidly as possible. The American Academy of Family Physicians, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the Public Health Service all agreed and the historic joint statement calling for the removal of thimerosal from infant vaccines was signed in 1999.

In July of 2000, Dr Roger Bernier, representing the CDC's National Immunization Program, testified under oath before the Government Reform Committee, stating, "We

agree that we do not need to have thimerosal in vaccines. If it doesn't need to be there, we should take it out. And we should take it out as rapidly as possible. We have agreed to that. The Public Health Service, the vaccine manufacturers, and the academies are all in agreement. We have two, in my career, historic documents which are joint statements by the American Academy of Family Physicians, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the Public Health Service, which includes NIH, FDA, HRSA and CDC all signing one statement. That is not easy to accomplish, believe me. We have all said that this material should come out as soon as possible. We don't disagree.”

http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=106_house_hearings&docid=f:72722.wais

Shortly thereafter, the Advisory Committee for Immunization Practices (ACIP) established a new recommendation that all pregnant women and infants starting at 6 months of age should be immunized for the flu. Today, approximately 90% of all injectable influenza vaccine contains 25 to 50 mcg of thimerosal, depending on the dose. Instead of removing mercury as promised, the exposure to this known neurotoxin was shifted to an even earlier and more vulnerable period of development. In addition, the safety and efficacy of influenza vaccine during pregnancy has never been established. The EPA currently estimates that 1 in every 6 women of childbearing age already has levels of mercury that could cause neurological harm to their unborn child. Mercury- containing flu vaccines add even more exposure to an already vulnerable population.

The Institute of Medicine convened a panel of experts in 2001 as part of an ongoing immunization safety review effort to review the existing literature regarding *Thimerosal-Containing Vaccines and Neurodevelopmental Disorders*. The committee stated in the public health response section of the report “that full consideration be given by appropriate professional societies and government agencies to remove thimerosal from vaccines administered to infants, children or pregnant women in the United States.” Unfortunately, this has not happened.

SafeMinds, and fourteen other organizations, have repeatedly requested that the CDC’s Advisory Committee for Immunization Practices (ACIP) state a preference for mercury-free vaccines for these vulnerable populations (see attached letter). Despite the recommendation of the Institute of Medicine, the CDC continues to ignore our request. In addition, the American Nurses Association came out with a position statement regarding thimerosal in 2006 insisting that pharmaceutical companies “cease using thimerosal as a preservative in vaccines immediately.”

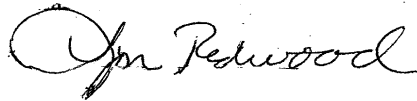
<http://www.nursingworld.org/MainMenuCategories/ANAPoliticalPower/State/StateLegislativeAgenda/EliminatingMercury/Thimerosal.aspx>

Last year pregnant women were exposed to two mercury-containing vaccines, the seasonal flu vaccine and H1N1 vaccine. Infants received these same mercury-containing flu vaccines at 6 and 7 months of age and children receive flu vaccines annually. We would like to request that the committee please investigate why injecting mercury into these vulnerable populations continues despite recommendations by the Institute of Medicine, and the American Nurses Association. We would like to know why the growing

body of scientific literature documenting the negative health effects of thimerosal, even from very small exposures, is being ignored. Public health officials under sworn testimony in 2000 stated that thimerosal would be taken out “as rapidly as possible.” So why does this practice continue today, a full decade later?

As the parent of a child who was found to have body burdens of mercury far in excess of EPA federal safety guidelines and who has suffered with multiple health problems and neurological injury, this is an issue which has personally affected my family and countless other families throughout the US. We appreciate your leadership in protecting the health, safety and welfare of the American public and look forward to your response to our request to investigate an important public health issue.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lyn Redwood". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lyn Redwood RN, MSN
Executive Director, SafeMinds