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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

GENup Co-Sponsors Teens Choose Vaccines Act to Allow Teens 12 and Up to Vaccinate Without Parental Consent *Press release*

SACRAMENTO, CA, 22 JAN 2022 - In a joint press conference yesterday with ProtectUS, Teens for Vaccines, San Francisco County Director of Health Dr. Grant Colfax, and State Senator Scott Wiener (D-San Francisco), GENup representatives Alvin Lee, Cady Chen, and Iris Zhou announced that they are co-sponsoring SB 866, also known as the Teens Choose Vaccines Act. SB 866 will allow individuals 12 years and older to receive vaccines officially approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) as well as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) without parental consent. This legislation builds off existing precedent with regards to teenagers being able to receive vaccinations for the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) and Hepatitis B, in addition to receiving care for their sexual and mental health, without the consent of a parent.

The Teens Choose Vaccines Act addresses the pressing need to increase COVID-19 vaccination rates among schoolchildren amid a surge of Omicron cases in schools. As the transmissibility of COVID-19 continues to increase, almost one million young people aged 12-17 remain unvaccinated, potentially putting themselves, their loved ones, and their peers at risk of serious illness or death. Indeed, a recent [study](#) from the New England Journal of Medicine found that nearly all teenagers who are admitted into an Intensive Care Unit (ICU) or die as a result of COVID-19 are unvaccinated.

This issue intersects with socioeconomic status and mental health as well. Mandating the presence of a parent when children aged 12-17 receive a vaccine poses an accessibility problem for teenagers from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds, as their parents' inability to take paid time off and take their child to a vaccination clinic may indefinitely delay when they could receive a vaccine. In addition, COVID-19 infections can have significantly detrimental effects on the mental health of young people. A recent study from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services found that teenagers from ages 12-17 with a COVID-19 diagnosis are nearly seven times as likely as their peers to experience a new or recurring mental health diagnosis. School closures are also known to have adverse effects on teenagers exhausted by their virtual learning environments, a noteworthy problem given recent closures in response to outbreaks.

By passing SB 866, the state of California will be empowering teens to make their own decisions in the best interest of their physical health and well-being. The state will also be recognizing the importance of not limiting teenagers' bodily autonomy, an especially urgent issue at this crucial juncture when pregnant people's rights are [under assault](#) at the national level. Allowing teenagers more control over their health decisions will make California as a whole safer, more inclusive, and more prosperous as a result. GENup is proud to champion this historic piece of legislation, and it looks forward to working with Senator Wiener in supporting its passage as a primary sponsor.

"Giving young people the autonomy to receive life-saving vaccines, regardless of their parents' beliefs or work schedules, is essential for their physical and mental health," said Senator Scott Wiener. "COVID-19 is a deadly virus for the unvaccinated, and it's unconscionable for teens to be blocked from the vaccine because a parent either refuses or cannot take their child to a vaccination site. So many teens want to be vaccinated so that they can lead a more normal life — participating in sports or band, traveling, going to friends' homes — but they're prevented from doing so due to their parents' political views or inability to find the time. Unvaccinated teens also make schools less safe and threaten our ability to keep schools open. In states like Alabama and South Carolina, teenagers are already allowed to get vaccinated without parental consent. Young Californians should also have the right to keep themselves healthy and safe."

"Ensuring students have fair and equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines is critical if we are to recover from this global pandemic," said Alvin Lee, Founder of GENup. "Receiving the COVID-19 vaccine is a matter of physical safety, potentially even concerning life or death. We need our students to be both safe and healthy on school campuses. Allowing students to self-consent to the vaccine will ensure all students, regardless of familial circumstances, will have the autonomy to protect their physical health and wellbeing. Let's keep our students healthy!"

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