

OTHER VIEWS

Hold firm on state's vaccination requirements

It's awfully good news that the number of vaccination waivers in the state of Michigan have dropped nearly 40 percent in the year since the state began requiring that people who don't want their kids to get disease-preventing shots hear from health department officials about the dangers.

For starters, it shows how education about an issue matters and can work. Presumably, a number of families changed their minds after sitting through health department explanations about the dangers of sitting out vaccinations.

And even for those the rule dissuaded from even thinking about not having their kids vaccinated, the drop shows the strength of government in protecting public health — a lesson not remotely lost in the wake of the Flint water crisis.

But lawmakers need to

stand strong. A bill introduced last month would rescind the new rule and allow parents to waive vaccinations without much effort. It is a problematic reach backward at a time when vaccinations are a critical public health issue.

Michigan, for reasons that cross the political, social and economic spectrum, was the sixth-highest state for vaccination waivers in 2014. For some parents, this is about fear of the vaccination itself — that the risk of side effects is not worth the disease prevention. For others, it's about disbelief of the vaccinations themselves: that shots won't keep their kids safe. And there are religious objections, social objections — all manner of reasons that parents choose not to engage in standard disease prevention.

— *The Detroit Free Press* (Jan. 28)