



State Senator

Rita Heard Days

District 14



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HPV Vaccine Bill Receives First-Round Approval

*Measure Would Give Young Women Protections
Against Cancer-Causing Virus*

The Missouri Senate this week gave first-round approval to a bill that would give our young women in Missouri certain protections against the human papilloma virus (HPV), a virus that causes most cases of cervical cancer.

I am one of six senators who have signed on to co-sponsor [Senate Bill 104](#), which would provide the opportunity for female students enrolling in the sixth grade at public schools to be immunized for HPV. Students may receive the immunization at the option of a parent or guardian. The bill also requires the state's [Department of Health and Senior Services](#) to mail relevant information regarding the connection between HPV and cervical cancer, as well as the risk factors for HPV and the availability of the HPV vaccination to the parents of sixth-grade girls.

Each year, approximately 12,000 women are diagnosed with cervical cancer and almost 4,000 women die from this disease in our country. The vaccine addressed in Senate Bill 104 is highly effective in preventing those types of HPV and related diseases in young women.

The vaccine is routinely recommended for 11 and 12 year old girls. The vaccine is also recommended for girls and women age 13 through 26 who have not yet been vaccinated or completed the vaccine series. The vaccine can also be given to girls 9 or 10 years of age.

This vaccine has been licensed by the [Food and Drug Administration](#) (FDA) and approved by the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC) as "safe and effective." The retail price for the full dose vaccination series is \$375, or about \$125 per dose. Most large insurance plans cover the costs of the recommended vaccines. Children age 18 and younger maybe eligible to get vaccines, including the HPV vaccine, for free through the [Vaccines for Children](#) (VFC) program as long as they are Medicaid eligible,

uninsured, an American Indian or an Alaska native. Doctors can charge a small fee to give each shot, however, VFC vaccines cannot be denied to an eligible child if the family cannot afford the fee.

Many states also provide free or low-cost vaccines at public health department clinics to individuals who do not have health insurance coverage for vaccines. Visit the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services Immunization website at www.dhss.mo.gov/Immunizations to find out if the facilities in your area participate in these free or low-cost immunization programs.

According to the [National Conference of State Legislatures](#), lawmakers in at least 41 states, including Washington, D.C., have introduced legislation that would require, fund, or educate the public about the HPV vaccine and at least 19 states have enacted this type of legislation.

Senate Bill 104 is currently set for a final Senate vote before moving to the House of Representatives for similar consideration. I am hopeful lawmakers will deliver this beneficial legislation to the governor's desk for his signature. Passage of this legislation will help ensure a bright and healthy future for women across our state.

If you have comments or questions about this week's column or any other matter involving state government, please feel free to contact my office at (573) 751-4106.

*Senator Rita Heard Days represents a portion of
St. Louis County in the Missouri Senate.*



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