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# January is Cervical Cancer Awareness Month

## *SB 627 Seeks to Reduce Number of Cases in Missouri*

JEFFERSON CITY - This year more than 11,070 women across the United States will be diagnosed with cervical cancer, and nearly 4,000 women will die of the disease.

Fortunately, cervical cancer is highly preventable through screenings and vaccinations. With that in mind, I have filed Senate Bill 627, which provides parents of public school students information about the human papillomavirus (HPV). The bill calls on the Department of Health and Senior Services to mail age appropriate information to parents or guardians of students entering the sixth grade regarding the connection between HPV and cervical cancer and the availability of the HPV immunization.

Cervical cancer is caused by the human papillomavirus (HPV), a common sexually-transmitted infection. It is estimated that more than 700 women in Missouri will be diagnosed with cervical cancer this year. When found and treated early, this disease is curable.

The US Food and Drug Administration has approved new lifesaving technologies for the prevention of cervical cancer, including an HPV vaccine for primary prevention. The HPV vaccine is considered one of the most significant developments in women's health in recent years. The vaccine is not recommended for everyone, and it does not

prevent all strains of HPV or eliminate the need for annual Pap tests and gynecological exams that screen for cervical cancer.

I am hopeful SB 627 will succeed in this new legislative session. The Senate has approved similar legislation during the previous three sessions, but each time the measure has died in the House.

Under my legislation, each family of a student entering the sixth grade would receive information about the risk factors for developing cervical cancer, the connection between HPV and cervical cancer, how it is transmitted and how transmission can be prevented, the latest scientific information about the immunization's effectiveness and safety, information about the importance of pap smears, and a statement explaining that questions from parents or guardians may be answered by a health care provider.

Each January as we observe National Cervical Cancer Awareness Month, it's important to remind our mothers, sisters, daughters and friends that yearly exams are the best way to prevent cervical cancer. Women should talk to their healthcare provider about the most advanced and appropriate technologies available.

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