

# Hawaii lawmakers kill vaccine bill after heated debate

February 5 2016, by Marina Riker

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After listening to Hawaii residents speak out against vaccines and saying they cause everything from autism to the Zika virus, Hawaii lawmakers killed a bill to speed up the state's process for adopting federal vaccination guidelines.

The bill would have allowed the state Health Department to more easily adopt the federal rules, which some opponents of the measure fear would result in more vaccinations. Under the bill considered by the Senate Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection and Health, the department would have 90 days to adopt rules.

Immediately after hearing opposition to the bill, Sen. Rosalyn Baker said Thursday it wouldn't move forward. Her announcement came before the usual time when lawmakers decide on the bills.

Baker said the bill didn't pass because there seemed to be "so much confusion and a lot of misinformation" about what it would do.

Sen. Will Espero, who is on Baker's committee, said he hasn't seen a lawmaker do that before.

"Normally she would wait to the end of the agenda," Espero said. "But in this case, she felt that it might be best before we get to the other bill to just share with them that, 'FYI, I hear you, and I've made the decision.' "

Baker's decision shows how the public can be involved in making laws,

Espero said.

Supporters of the bill say it would have helped the Hawaii Department of Health address public health crises quickly. They said given the potential for diseases to spread rapidly, it's important to be able to adopt vaccination rules swiftly.

Opponents of the bill spoke out against mandatory vaccinations, saying their side effects are harmful and the people should have the right to make their own [health](#) decisions.

"We're all about freedom," said Renee Kawelo, who opposed the [bill](#). "We want you to have the choice to decide. If you want a vaccine, great. Go vaccinate yourself."

Kawelo said she doesn't want to vaccinate her children because vaccines could make them sick.

Vaccinations are a hot-button issue across the nation. For decades, critics have said vaccines can cause debilitating side effects—most notably autism, which scientific research has debunked.

Almost all states grant religious exemptions for people who have religious beliefs against vaccinations, while 20 states allow exemptions for personal or moral beliefs, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures.

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