

EDITORIAL

Mounting a ground war against anti-vaxxers



STOCK.ADOBE.COM

JANUARY 31, 2018

according to The New York Times, 97 percent of California kids lived in counties with a kindergarten vaccination rate above 95 percent.

Vermont is also transforming its system. A law eliminating the philosophical exemption for vaccination of schoolkids took effect in mid-2016. “We have to focus on schools, where kids spend most of their time every day. This is a key place where states can work to protect children,” said Christine Finley, the Immunization Program Manager at the Vermont Department of Health. Even with only a year of data, there are signs of success: Nearly 94 percent of all Vermont students enrolled in grades K-12 received all their vaccines, the [highest rate](#) in the last five years.

Closer to home, the Commonwealth leads the nation in measles vaccine rates for children between 19 and 35 months. But pockets of Western Massachusetts and the Cape and Islands have higher exemption rates for medical and religious reasons (there is no personal exemption), and health officials fear they may be more susceptible to measles outbreaks, which can sometimes have serious consequences.

“Vaccines are one of the most effective public health interventions of the 20th century, second only to clean water,” said a spokesperson from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. “Since the introduction of the measles, mumps, and rubella vaccine and its subsequent widespread use, we have seen a 99 percent reduction in measles cases across the United States.”

If all politics is local, so is public health. Wise state policy, micro-targeted toward local schools and communities, is the best remedy for anti-vax luddites like Kilmeade and [Robert Kennedy Jr.](#), who are noisy peddlers of a conspiracy-centric belief system that’s more akin to religious zeal than science.