

DECIPHERING THE CODE:

Vaccine Policy and Anti-Vaccine Messaging

Certain phrases in the vaccine policy discussion may mean different things to you as a legislator compared to an anti-vaccine group.

CODE: "Mandatory vaccines"

TRANSLATION:

- This code relies on a strawman argument.
- No one in the policy space is forcing parents to vaccinate their child. Parents do not have to vaccinate – period.
- Discussions in the policy arena focus on vaccine guidelines for school entry.
- Each state also has rules allowing parents to exempt their child if they are not medically able to be vaccinated.
- Maintaining strong community immunity is critical, largely because of those medically vulnerable, unvaccinated children.

CODE: "Vaccine choice" or "Health choice"

TRANSLATION:

- This term is used to frame the policy conversation as a matter of "choice" rather than having arguments about the science of vaccines.
- Anti-vaccine groups often don't explicitly oppose vaccination, but instead frame the issue as a matter of individual choice, freedom or personal liberties.
- No one is forcing anyone to vaccinate, so it already is a matter of individual choice.

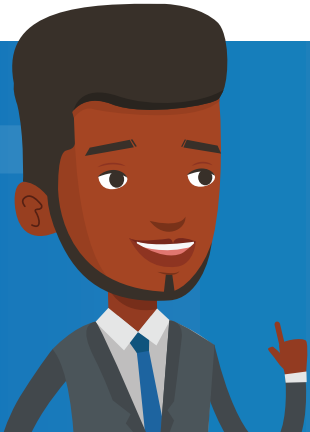
CODE: "Parents' rights"



TRANSLATION:

- Anti-vaccine activists do not recognize that one parent's choice to not vaccinate will put other people's children and an entire community at risk.
- The vaccine conversation is different than other conversations about a parent's right to make medical decisions for their child. Immunization decisions can impact the safety of entire communities.

CODE: "Medical freedom"



TRANSLATION:

- Anti-vaccine activists believe there should be no immunization requirements whatsoever — but there's a reason all 50 states have vaccination guidelines for school and child care entry — the public health benefits of vaccines far outweigh any risks.
- Children should have the right to attend school or child care in a safe environment.
- It is reasonable to establish parameters to protect the community's health.

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