

## **MEDIA ALERT**

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### **As Follow-Up to the Trenton Vaccination Choice Rally, Parents Meet With NJ Health Commissioner Heather Howard - Meeting Promised By Governor Corzine**

**December 3, 2008, Trenton, NJ** – Four parents from the **New Jersey Coalition for Vaccination Choice** (NJCV) are meeting with the Commissioner of the NJ Department of Health and Senior Services (NJDHSS) Heather Howard and seven senior members of her department this morning at 11:00 a.m. at the DHSS Main Building in Trenton. This meeting was promised by Governor Corzine in September when he addressed a large group of parents gathered on the front lawn of Coalition member Louise Habakus in Middletown after attending a Democratic National Committee fundraiser in honor of then Senator Obama.

Strong public pressure has been steadily building in support of the parental vaccination choice bill currently in the health committees of the Assembly and Senate: A260/S1071, the Conscientious Exemption to Mandatory Vaccination. Seven hundred people rallied in Trenton on October 16, an event which received national and local TV, print and radio coverage. Over ten thousand people have signed a petition in support of this bill. Parents are especially outraged by one of four new mandated vaccines effective this September, a flu shot for young children ages 6 to 59 months as a requirement for daycare and preschool. New Jersey is the first state in the country to mandate the flu shot. The flu shot has become a lightning rod for the issue of parental vaccination choice nationwide.

According to research provided by parents, the flu shot is a controversial vaccine that has never been proven effective. It has been soundly rejected by the broad marketplace and even by most health professionals who refuse to get the shot for themselves. It is no better than placebo for children under two. There are no adequate safety tests performed, in large part because the vaccine must be reformulated annually. And the vast majority of doses contain 25 micrograms of a devastating neurotoxin. Credentialed experts are increasingly coming forward to criticize our nation's one size fits all vaccine policy. **Dr. Lawrence Rosen, a board-certified pediatrician and Chief of Pediatric Integrative Medicine at Hackensack University Medical Center notes, "There are risks associated with *all* medical procedures, including vaccines, so it is important for parents, and their doctors, to evaluate an individual child's medical history and health, including genetic predispositions and allergies, to determine what is appropriate. Informed consent is the highest standard in the ethical practice of modern medicine."**

Parents want to ask the Health Commissioner why NJ must be the first in the country to step up to the plate to mandate this shot. "In view of existing and emerging science linking vaccines to neuro-developmental disorders and chronic disease, why wouldn't we err on the side of caution?" asks Habakus, who refers to the nearly one thousand studies and findings submitted to Vaccine Court on behalf of thousands of families. "Indeed, why not wait to hear what our government has to say about these court cases?" asks attorney and parent Claudine Liss. All branches of the military recently made the decision to enforce a mandatory flu shot as a requirement for on-base child care programs.

In addition to Commissioner Howard, NJDHSS meeting attendees will be: Mary E O'Dowd, Chief of Staff; Dr. Christina Tan, Deputy Commissioner; Carl Rathjen, Deputy Chief of Staff; Angela Sorrells, Program Manager, Vaccine Preventable Disease Program, Communicable Disease Program; Dr. Barbara Montana, Medical Director, Communicable Disease; Dileep Sarecha, Program Manager, Vaccine Preventable Disease Program, Communicable Disease Program; and Janet DeGraaf, Director, Communicable Disease Program. Parent attendees will be: Louise Kuo Habakus, Maureen Drummond from Long Valley, Claudine Liss from Little Falls and Barbara Majeski from Princeton. The meeting is expected to last one hour. **Parents will be available after the meeting or by phone for interviews with the press.** NJCV is comprised of local, state and national organizations and individuals including physicians, attorneys, holistic organizations, vaccine safety and autism support groups. Go to [www.njvaccinationchoice.org](http://www.njvaccinationchoice.org) for more information.