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## **'BEWARE OF B' CAMPAIGN LAUNCHES, URGING COLLEGE STUDENTS TO VACCINATE AGAINST MENINGITIS B**

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Indianapolis, IN** – When teenager Laura Lynn Loken came down with a fever and headache on a Saturday afternoon in March of 1988 – after shopping and hanging out with friends – nobody thought for a minute she might die. But the “flu-like” disease shockingly became deadly. Despite doctors’ efforts, the meningitis B bacteria ravaged Laura’s body, and within 24 hours, Laura was gone.

It was then that Laura’s younger sister, Dr. Karla Loken, chose to dedicate her life to medicine.

This summer, the Indiana Immunization Coalition is partnering with pharmacies across the state to launch ‘Beware of B,’ in an effort to educate parents and students about the benefits of the meningitis B vaccination, and to make it easy to obtain the important protection needed before heading to school in the fall.

Each year, approximately 1,000 people contract meningococcal disease in the United States. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has found that among those who become infected, 10 to 15 percent will die. Of those who survive, another 20 percent will suffer from permanent disabilities, such as brain damage, loss of limbs, hearing loss and/or other serious impacts to the nervous system.

Indiana State Law requires that all universities and colleges inform students of the risks associated with meningococcal disease and the benefits of vaccination. However, this required information does not specifically address the B strain of the disease – a strain that accounts for 50 percent of all cases in persons 17 to 23 years of age in the U.S.

In Indiana, all of the meningitis cases in 2014 were caused by the meningitis B strain and in 2015, 5 of the 6 cases were meningitis B.

The first B vaccine was FDA approved in 2014, and while not required, the CDC recommends it for anyone ages 11 to 23. The vaccine is especially important for those living in close quarters, like college dorms, where the disease can rapidly spread. In fact, since spring of 2013, meningitis B outbreaks have occurred on five major college campuses in the U.S.

According to results from the National Meningococcal Disease Awareness Survey, nearly 4 in 5 parents say they were unaware that their child was not fully immunized against the five common groups of meningococcal disease.

“It breaks me to hear the stories – similar to my sister’s – of meningitis victims and survivors,” said Dr. Loken, now a practicing obstetrician/gynecologist in and around the Indianapolis area. “But finally, there is a B vaccine! I want every parent to know about the dangers of meningitis B, and most importantly, the opportunity to protect their children from it... an opportunity my parents did not have.”

Anyone seeking immunization against meningitis B should be able to access the vaccine through their doctor or by visiting one of the following Walgreens stores in Indiana:

**Ball State University**

Walgreens Store #05803  
2720 W. Jackson St.  
Muncie, IN 47303  
765-287-8533

**Butler University**

Walgreens Store #03066  
5675 N. Michigan Rd  
Indianapolis, IN 46208  
317-475-0372

**Indiana State University**

Walgreens Store #03486  
1300 Wabash Ave  
Terre Haute, IN 47807  
812-234-5147

**Indiana University**

Walgreens Store #07676  
1900 S. Ohio St.  
Martinsville, IN 46151  
765-349-2340

**Indiana Wesleyan University**

Walgreens Store # 9279  
2620 S. Western Ave  
Marion, IL 46953  
765-668-0208

**Purdue University**

Walgreens Store #06456  
1000 Sagamore Pkwy  
West Lafayette, IN 47906  
765-497-2300

**University of Indianapolis**

Walgreens Store #02952  
4001 Madison Ave  
Indianapolis, IN 46227  
317-780-1990

**University of Notre Dame**

Walgreens Store #15598  
107 St. Liam Hall  
Notre Dame, IN 46556  
574-239-3847

Walgreens Store #10184

1351 N. Ironwood Dr.  
South Bend, IN 46615  
574-234-5046

**University of Southern Indiana**

Walgreens Store #10939  
4828 Davis Lant Dr.  
Evansville, IN 47715  
812-475-9541

**Valparaiso University**

Walgreens Store #03680  
1903 Calumet Ave  
Valparaiso, IN 46383  
219-462-6172

Materials will also be available to download from [www.vaccinateindiana.org/beware-of-b/](http://www.vaccinateindiana.org/beware-of-b/) vaccinate for school officials and advisors to share with parents and incoming students, and there are plans to alert parent Facebook groups, student newspapers and college health centers.

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