

“Vaccine shortage inspires new bill”

The Advocate (06/15/06) Marsha Shuler

<http://www.theadvocate.com/news/3055311.html>

A shortage of bacterial meningitis vaccine is forcing the Louisiana legislature to pass a new law to protect college students from the debilitating disease. Earlier this year, state lawmakers passed a law that requires all college students in the state to be vaccinated against bacterial meningitis. But because of the vaccine shortage, discovered after the law was enacted, the Senate Health and Welfare Committee recently approved a new bill, HB 768, that will focus vaccination on the highest risk students on college campuses, first-time freshmen and students living in campus housing. According to Rep. Mike Strain, who introduced the new bill, “We will use the vaccine where it’s most effective first.” The bill calls for the health secretary to develop a plan to phase in the vaccinations for other college populations, as more vaccine becomes available. According to Strain, vaccine may not be available for all students for three more years. If passed by the full legislature, the new bill will supersede the law passed earlier this year. The current law was proposed in response to bacterial meningitis outbreaks at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette and Loyola University and the deaths of several students.

[Editor’s note: To read the text of HB 768, visit

<http://www.legis.state.la.us/billdata/streamdocument.asp?did=401870>. For information

from CDC on meningitis vaccination, please visit

http://www.cdc.gov/nip/vaccine/mening/mening_fs.htm.]