



MEMORANDUM

To: Rep. Garrett, Chair, House Committee on Rules
Rep. Hicks, Vice-Chair, House Committee on Rules
Rep. Hoyle, Vice-Chair, House Committee on Rules
Members of the House Committee on Rules

From: Dr. James K. Lace, OMA Legislative Committee Chair

Date: June 12, 2013

Re: Support of SB 132-A

Oregon's non-medical immunization exemption rate for kindergartners is the worst in the U.S. and has more than doubled in the last decade. The decrease in the number of children vaccinated against diseases like measles and pertussis is directly correlated to an increase in the number of cases of those conditions in Oregon. For example, in 2012, over 800 cases of pertussis were documented, the highest rate seen in Oregon since the 1950s.

Immunizations are an effective way to keep our children, families and communities safe and healthy. When "herd immunity" is achieved and approximately 94 percent of all school-age children are immunized, lower rates of measles, pertussis and other vaccine-preventable disease is seen and children who cannot be immunized due to age or medical conditions are protected from preventable diseases.

The OMA supports SB 132-A as it will ensure parents receive credible, medically-based information about immunizations and vaccine-preventable diseases without limiting existing non-medical exemptions for immunizations. As a practicing pediatrician, I support increasing education to parents from the provider on the risks of not immunizing their child, even if it means giving more information in an already time-limited appointment. The legislation requires either a provider's signature to verify the conversation occurred with the parent during the appointment or allows for referral to the appropriate venue to attend the certified training offered by the state. The information offered either by the health care practitioner or via the state training will provide parents with unbiased and medically accurate information about immunizations, the diseases they prevent and herd-immunity. Armed with accurate information, parents can make an informed decision about immunizing their child and better understand how immunizations have an impact on the health of their children and the health of all children.

I believe that this legislation can reverse Oregon's immunizations rate and better protect all children from diseases that can be prevented. Similar legislation passed in Washington in 2011, resulting in a

25% decrease in non-medical immunization exemptions. Given Oregon's deplorable rates and the results in Washington, I believe that this legislation could have a positive impact on our children, families and communities across the state.

Thank you for your consideration and support of this bill.

The Oregon Medical Association is an organization of over 8,100 physicians, physician assistants, and medical students organized to serve and support physicians in their efforts to improve the health of Oregonians. Additional information can be found at www.theOMA.org.