

Doernbecher Children's
Hospital

Department of Pediatrics
Division of General
Pediatrics and Adolescent
Medicine

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Katharine E. Zuckerman, MD
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To:

The Honorable Laurie Monnes Anderson
Senate Health Care and Human Services Committee

Subject:

SB 132, Changes documentation that must be submitted to school administrator for purpose of opting out of immunizations

February 19, 2013

Members of the Senate Health Care and Human Services Committee, I am a general pediatrician from Doernbecher Children's Hospital at Oregon Health & Sciences University (OHSU). Today I would like to express my strong personal support, and OHSU's institutional support, for SB 132. We feel that this legislation is a crucial way to reduce vaccine-preventable illness in Oregon.

OHSU Doernbecher cares for tens of thousands of Oregon children each year, and we have over two thousand pediatricians on our faculty. As a result, in our hospital and clinics, we take care of hundreds of children whose lives can be devastated by vaccine-preventable illness. Some are children with cancer, or with immunodeficiencies, who either cannot safely be immunized, or whose immune systems cannot effectively respond to vaccines. Some have chronic heart or lung problems that make respiratory illnesses, such as pertussis or pneumococcal pneumonia, deadly. We also take care of many young infants who are too young to receive vaccines.

These at-risk children rely on low rates of vaccine-preventable illness in the community to protect them. My colleagues and I routinely counsel parents to immunize their children. We offer free immunizations to parents of at-risk kids. However, none of these efforts can be truly effective if our most vulnerable patients encounter children in their schools and communities who have vaccine-preventable diseases.

Unfortunately, immunization rates in Oregon are decreasing, and we are seeing the consequences of this decrease. Pertussis is on the rise, and we have had several infants placed on respirators in our intensive care unit because of pertussis complications this year. Chicken pox is also back in our communities, and we care for children in our Emergency Department and inpatient units with complications of this disease. We recently had a patient with measles in one of our outpatient clinics, who exposed the entire lobby to this highly contagious disease.

SB 132 is an important way that we can be sure that as many parents as possible make an informed decision about immunization for their children. Far too many parents take a school exemption for convenience purposes, or based on misinformation about vaccines. This legislation will make sure that parents who request an exemption will do so in light of the best available evidence.



It is time to make a change here in Oregon. Children die in this state every year from vaccine-preventable illness. We can reduce such unthinkable outcomes by passing SB 132.

Doernbecher Children's Hospital

Thank you very much for your consideration. I would welcome any questions you might have.

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Katharine Zuckerman".

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