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February 18, 2015

Chair Monnes Anderson, Members,
Senate Committee on Health Care
Oregon Legislature
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97031

Re: Support for SB 442

Chair Monnes Anderson, Members of the
Senate Committee on Health Care:

For the record, my name is BJ Cavnor and I serve as the executive director for One in Four Chronic Health, Oregon's chronic health care coalition. We provide advocacy and public policy for people living with chronic health conditions.

I would like to speak to you today to offer our support of Senate Bill 442.

The recent Measles outbreak at Disneyland in California, has infected 141 people in 17 states and the District of Columbia, and illustrates the problems we face educating parents and maintaining the safety of our public health. Far too many Oregon parents have relied on discredited medical information, fear and questionable science in making the decision to not vaccinate their children. We respect the rights of parents to make informed decisions on behalf of their children, yet we also have laws in place to protect children from harm.

Where a parent would face legal measures if they denied food or safe shelter to their children, we allow parents to exempt their children from vaccines that protect them from communicable diseases. When we do this we not only impact the health of one family, but also the public health of our communities.

Vaccines work because of herd immunity, or "when a critical portion of the population is immunized against a contagious disease" according to the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Disease. There are people in the community who for medical reasons, cannot be vaccinated. They include; infants under six months of age, people with chronic autoimmune conditions, people being treated with chemotherapy for cancer, people with rheumatologic disease, transplant patients and the elderly.

The system works when those able to be immunized do so, to protect themselves, their children and the community from preventable communicable disease.

As we age, our own ability to fight off communicable disease lessens, even though we were vaccinated as children and follow guidelines for additional boosters, such as Tdap and annual flu shots. In December of 2013 I went to see my doctor because of a very violent, intense cough that caused breathing to be difficult. My doctor diagnosed it as Pertussis, or Whooping Cough and treated me with antibiotics, steroids, cough suppressant and inhalers. I recovered in time, but as a person with an autoimmune condition, I was at a higher risk of complications. Most frightening to me was that two weeks before becoming ill, I had traveled to meet my newborn niece in Connecticut. Because of the choice someone made not to vaccinate their child, my own health and potentially that of my niece was jeopardized.

Senate Bill 442 will help close the loophole in the law and improve the health of all Oregonians.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony supporting this bill, if you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 206/601-8453 or via email at BJ@1-in-4.org.

Sincerely,



BJ Cavnor,
Executive Director