



## **MEMORANDUM**

To: Senator Roblan, Chair, Senate Committee on Education  
Senator Tim Knopp, Vice-Chair, Senate Committee on Education  
Members of the Senate Committee on Education

From: Bryan Boehringer, OMA Government Relations  
Courtnei Dresser, OMA Government Relations

Date: April 9, 2015

Re: Support for SB 895

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In 2014, the CDC non-medical immunization exemption rate for Oregon kindergartners placed Oregon dead last in the nation, with an exemption rate of 7.1 percent. Immunizations are an effective way to keep our children, families and communities safe and healthy. When approximately 94 percent of all school-age children are immunized, lower rates of measles, pertussis and other vaccine-preventable diseases are seen and children, infants and parents who cannot be immunized due to age or medical conditions are protected from preventable diseases.

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 these conditions in Oregon. For example, in 2012, over 800 cases of pertussis were documented, the highest rate seen in Oregon since the 1950s. By 2014, the lowest number of exemptions for Oregon kindergartners was for the DTap vaccine, which inoculates against whooping cough. No child should have to suffer a disease that could have been prevented.

The OMA continues to support efforts to increase Oregon's vaccination rate and believes SB 895 is good public policy that provides parents with information about immunization rates in the schools and child care facilities their children attend.

SB 895 gives parents another tool to understand the risk of preventable diseases their child may encounter in the place where they often spend the majority of their day. This is especially critical for parents of children who cannot be vaccinated due to a compromised immune system, who have infant siblings or another family member (including the parents) who, if exposed, would not have immunity to the disease. Understanding the school's or facility's community immunity to preventable disease through materials distributed and posted by the school or facility ensures that parents have all the information they need to make decisions about where their children are cared for and educated. It further allows the parent to make informed decisions about attending school functions and which family members they can safely bring to the event.

The OMA encourages the committee to support SB 895.