

Oregon AFSCME urges your support of SB 895 and the -2 amendments.

Chair Roblan and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of -2 amendments for SB 895. Oregon AFSCME Council 75 represents workers in public health, hospitals and clinics, early learning, child care and education around the state. Whether their focus is population health or caring for individuals, the AFSCME members in these jobs know first-hand the importance of vaccines. As public health workers we are in the front line of an underfunded system that is responsible for the health of the entire population of Oregon. We are in strong support of cost effective ways to make Oregon safer without over taxing the public health sector more than it already is. SB 895-2 will provide added protection by making sure Oregonians have talked with a medical provider and received their signature before receiving a non-medical exemption for vaccines .

Oregon places a high priority on protecting our most vulnerable citizens; it only makes sense that we would extend these protections to our children under the age of 1 and for those who medically cannot be vaccinated. Requiring a parent or guardian to receive a signature for non-medical exemptions for vaccines would, at the very least, help ensure that parents are learning how they are putting others at risk. Vaccinations are proven by science to work best for the entire population only if a large enough percentage of the population is immunized. Allowing a group to refrain from vaccinations without any medical reason or assurance that they understand the risks puts the entire population of Oregon in danger. It is not about the choice of one family but the safety of all Oregon. Vaccinations now could prevent a far more costly outbreak later. The cost of that outbreak in both money and lives is so preventable this bill should be easy to support.

One of our AFSCME represented child care providers recently had a child who had a fever on a Friday and was sent home. On Monday, the child no longer had a fever but toward the end of the day, bumps began to appear on her. She was again sent home and taken to the doctor, who gave a preliminary diagnosis of chicken pox. During those two days, two infants, one just a few weeks from turning one and one who is just a few weeks old were both at the child care and exposed. Fortunately, tests came back negative for chicken pox, but it called attention to the danger that exists for those who are medically unable to get vaccinated. This is the type of example that happens regularly and can spiral into something serious very easily.

We ask you to support SB 895-2 to protect the children, medically vulnerable and all people in Oregon.

Respectfully submitted by Eva Rippeteau, Political Coordinator, Oregon AFSCME Council 75.

