

To: Senate Health Care Committee
From: Brian Druker, MD
Director, OHSU Knight Cancer Institute

RE: Support HB 3041 - Providing Access to Sun Protection in Oregon's Schools

Chair Monnes-Anderson, Vice-Chair Kruse and Members of the Committee:

As director of the OHSU Knight Cancer Institute and an oncologist, my top priority is decreasing the number of people who die from cancer. We already know that one type of skin cancer, melanoma, is among the deadliest forms of the disease. It is also one of most preventable cancers as we know that over-exposure to UV radiation, especially in childhood is a leading cause of skin cancer, including melanoma. I am writing to share my professional opinion, and also to speak on behalf of Oregon Health & Science University, that House Bill 3041 represents an important and practical step forward in protecting our children from excess sun exposure and reinforcing positive, life-long cancer prevention behaviors.

As residents of a state known for its rain, it can be easy to underestimate the risks associated with sun exposure. But, Oregon has the fifth highest incidence rate of melanoma in the nation and the fourth highest death rate from melanoma. Since more than 40 percent of an individual's lifetime UV exposure occurs within the first 20 years, we need to do more to protect our state's children. Young people spend a substantial proportion of their lives in schools and are heavily influenced by the example educators set. With positive efforts under way to increase physical education, UV exposure during the school day is likely to rise. Providing schools and children with the flexibility to ensure they are protecting their skin is the smart and right thing to do. House Bill 3041 is a simple, common sense bill. As parents, we routinely tell our kids to apply sunscreen or cover-up before outdoor activities. But under current law, there's no support for that advice. In some schools, children can't use sunscreen unless we provide a doctor's prescription. In others, a doctor's prescription is not enough. This would be about the same as telling our kids they couldn't wear protective gear for a sporting event without a prescription and this makes no sense. House Bill 3014 takes a pragmatic, no-cost approach by enabling educators and students to follow basic cancer prevention guidance that calls for wearing sunscreen and protective clothing. I urge you to approve this legislation and, in doing so, send a message to Oregonians that it is imperative that we do everything we can to set children up for a lifetime of good health.