

Date: March 28, 2017

To: Senate Health Care Committee

From: Melissa Weddle, M.D., MPH
Associate Professor, Pediatrics
Oregon Health and Science University

Re: Opposition to SB 580 and SB 869

Chair Monnes-Anderson and members of the committee,

For the record my name is Melissa Weddle and I am a pediatrician at Oregon Health and Science University. Thank you for taking the time to hear from me today. I'm here on behalf of Oregon Health and Science University and the Oregon Medical Association to share our concerns and opposition to Senate Bill 580 and Senate Bill 869.

I have been a pediatrician for 29 years, the past 8 years here in Oregon. Every day I work to keep our children healthy. Senate Bill 580 and Senate Bill 869 present barriers to keeping children safe from preventable diseases. In order for a child to attend primary school or a daycare facility in Oregon, immunization records or documentation of a child's exemption is required. In 2015, according to the Oregon Public Health Department, about 2,700 kindergartners (almost 6% of all kindergartners) claimed an exemption to one or more required vaccines. This is a 17 percent decline from 2014. This put Oregon's rate of immunization close to achieving community immunity. That means that when enough children are immunized, not only are there lower rates of measles, pertussis and other vaccine-preventable but children who cannot be vaccinated due to their age or a medical condition are protected.

The decline of Oregon's exemption rate is attributed, in part, to legislation passed in 2013 that requires parents who wish to exempt their child from vaccination for a non-medical reason, to either discuss the benefits and risks of immunization with their health care provider or watch an educational video on the OHA website.

SB 580 and SB 869, if passed, would undo the gains of this 2013 legislation by placing duplicative and burdensome requirements on both healthcare providers and patients. It is important to understand that we health care providers, are already required to discuss the risks and benefits of each vaccination that we recommend (or any procedure for that matter). As part of that discussion, we give the Vaccine Information Sheet (VIS) published by the Centers for Disease and Control (CDC). In addition to complete information about the vaccine including benefits and possible side effects, the VIS also contains the contact information for the National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program. The requirement of SB 869 to include an additional state-formatted written notice and a journal excerpt that was not written for the lay person has the risk of overwhelming the parent, resulting in delay or refusal of vaccination. This disrupts my relationship with my patient. SB 132 in 2012 has effectively led to appropriate vaccine education (including the risks and benefits of the vaccine) and the legislature has consistently maintained appropriate vaccination exemptions.

We urge your support for maintaining and improving the health of all Oregon's children, as well as our citizens who are most vulnerable, those with compromised immune systems, infants too young to receive vaccinations, and the elderly. This morning in my clinic I cared for a little girl who could not receive some immunizations because of a problem with her immune system. You may know that in Oregon we experienced an outbreak of measles in 2012 and pertussis in 2014. Every year in my hospital we care for very sick children who have diseases that could have been prevented. So that we can continue to do our best to keep our children healthy, we encourage you to vote No on Senate Bill 580 and Senate Bill 869.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.