

February 25, 2019

To: Oregon State Legislature, Senate Committee on Health Care

Re: Support for HB 3063

Honorable Chair and Committee Members,

My name is Deidre L. Burton, MD. I am a pediatrician. I am a mother of three fully vaccinated adolescents. I have done medical service work in Romania, Kenya, Jamaica, Honduras, the Dominican Republic and Taiwan. I am vaccinated. I work and reside in Multnomah County. I am writing to urge your support of HB 3063, which seeks to remove the non-medical vaccine exemption from Oregon law.

Right now, Oregon and Southwest Washington are seeing first-hand the effects of the current measles outbreak on individuals, families, our caregivers and our community.

This outbreak was preventable. Those who opt out of vaccinating their children could place other vulnerable members of the population, including infants and those with compromised immune systems, at greater risk for exposure.

In the early 90's I did an infectious disease rotation in Southern California during their measles outbreak. I had the opportunity to participate in the care of children in the pediatric intensive care unit and who were hospitalized for weeks due to complications of measles. I learned first hand the devastating impact of a disease that is entirely preventable.

Despite what you may have heard, vaccines do not cause autism in children. Scientists at the CDC, the Institute of Medicine and other reputable entities have never found a credible link between the use of vaccines and autism in children.

Vaccines save lives. Vaccines reduce the cost of healthcare. Due to my age and travel experience I have taken care of children who have been ravaged by polio; paralyzed by tetanus; hospitalized for weeks because of pertussis; lost hearing due to H. Flu (a bacteria against which we now have a vaccines) meningitis; children who have lost limbs and life due to infections cause by Neisseria meningitidis and pneumococcus. My younger colleagues have never had these experiences because of vaccines.

It is absolutely not fair that a parent can make the best choices for their child and yet their child is still at risk because of the ill-informed and paranoid choices of another parent. Every infant under one exposed to a deliberately unvaccinated child with measles, pertussis, H. flu, pneumococcus, etc has their choice taken away from them. We do not allow parents to choose not to use car-seats or seatbelts. We do not let parents choose not to provide their children with an education. We do not allow parents to choose to beat a child because it falls within their religious guidelines. Why would we allow parents to choose to withhold vaccines that preserve life, limbs, hearing and neurologic function? Individual freedoms do not overshadow the health and wellness of the defenseless and vulnerable. Infants, cancer survivors, organ recipients,

immune compromised are entitled to a voice. I speak for them. Vaccines protect them and save their lives.

This is a crisis in our state and in our nation. An epidemic of lack of health and understanding that devastate our children and our health care system. Would you willingly expose children to polio, measles, tetanus, pertussis, H. Flu? Yet this is what we do when we allow skyrocketing exemption rates that undermine herd immunity and put vulnerable children in grave danger.

I urge you to move on behalf of our children. Save lives. Protect our children and those who have no voice. Do not be swayed by voices of the ill-informed; those who have never seen polio, measles, tetanus or overwhelming sepsis due to H. Flu or pneumococcus.

I ask the committee to protect children's lives. Please support HB 3063.

Thank you,

Deidre L. Burton, MD
Pediatrician and mom

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