



# RANDALL CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

LEGACY EMANUEL

## Pediatric Infectious Diseases

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DATE 26 FEB 2019

TO Oregon State Legislature, Senate Committee on Health Care

Re: Support for HB 3063

Honorable Chair and Committee Members,

I am Dr. Sayonara Mató, a Pediatric Infectious Diseases Hospitalist at Randall Children's Hospital at Legacy Emanuel in Portland, writing to urge your support of HB 3063, which seeks to **remove the non-medical vaccine exemption from Oregon law.**

Needless to say, 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 preventable disease outbreak (through timely vaccination of our children in the communities we serve) has not only caused human suffering by those children affected by disease and their adult home caregivers but it has cost our communities an immense amount of financial resources in treating instead of preventing disease, in lost work wages by parents who need to stay home to help care for sick children and because of isolation precautions to limit further spread, and by the State Public Health system in conducting a lengthy and ongoing disease outbreak investigation, and much more.

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 (i.e., cancer patients, patients receiving immunosuppressive drugs due to autoimmune disease, etc.), at greater risk for exposure leading to infection and disease.

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.

In my twenty-seven (27) years as a practicing clinician caring for children overseas and in the U.S., I have witnessed firsthand the huge benefits from disease prevention through childhood vaccination. For example, with the development of *Haemophilus influenzae* type b vaccine in 1990, the U.S. saw a >99% decline in bacterial meningitis

caused by this bacterium which translated in thousands of children without having to suffer deafness, blindness, seizures, cerebral palsy, learning disabilities, etc. A neurologically devastated child changes the life he/she could have had, the life of his/her family, and his/her role in society as a contributing citizen. The financial cost to any society also takes a great toll. Another example, in 2000 with the advent of conjugate pneumococcal vaccines, we >90% decline in bacterial meningitis, invasive bloodstream infections and complicated pneumonias by *Streptococcus pneumoniae* bacterium. Likewise, with whooping cough (pertussis), measles, chickenpox, and many more. The value of staying healthy and having health is priceless. Safe vaccines in the U.S. have the ability to achieve this.

#### Key Messages:

**Vaccines save lives.**

**Vaccine exemption rates are skyrocketing in Oregon.** Right now, 7.5% of children in kindergarten are unvaccinated, putting us below the community immunity threshold and endangering vulnerable populations.

**This isn't about removing choice, this is about protecting those who have NO choice.** Individuals with compromised immune systems, infants, cancer survivors, transplant recipients and many others have no protection against certain diseases. As a conscientious society, it is our responsibility to protect those who cannot protect themselves by getting vaccinated.

**We are facing a public health emergency today.** Oregon is seeing the impact of high vaccine exemption rates in the Portland area as over 64 individuals have contracted MEASLES infection, an extremely contagious disease with devastating effects.

You have been given the power by the people of Oregon to represent us ALL, vulnerable children included. The children cannot override their adult home caregivers decisions, which at times, may not be in the best interest of the children themselves, and the community they live in as we are talking about INDIVIDUAL HEALTH as well as PUBLIC HEALTH for Oregonians. I have dedicated my adult life and medical career to protect the health of children, to help families raise healthy and thriving children, and to adhere to „first do no harm“ in our oath as physicians. That includes quality of life FREE of preventable infections which can lead to chronic medical conditions and even death. Safe vaccines in the U.S. have the power of doing just that. Think about this very carefully, and follow by taking action to help protect ALL our children.

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

Thank you,

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