

February 26, 2019

TO Oregon State Legislature, Senate Committee on Health Care

Re: Support for HB 3063

Honorable Chair and Committee Members,

My name is Jenny Malcom, MD, and I'm a pediatrician from Metropolitan Pediatrics in Gresham, OR, 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. Our office is being inundated daily with panicked phone calls and visits from families who are scared that their infant or immunocompromised child (neither of whom can be immunized for measles) is at risk for contracting this completely preventable disease. These same families are keeping their infants and children at home to prevent exposure – they are going crazy with the possibility that their vulnerable child might die or suffer severe complications as a result of infection.

Interestingly, we also have many unvaccinated families who are coming to the clinic in droves requesting that their children receive the measles (MMR) vaccine due to the current measles outbreak; the puzzling and disheartening thing is that most do not want any other vaccines – they are scared about the current measles outbreak, but yet still decline all other inoculations that could mean life or death for their children, as well as many others.

As I mentioned above, this outbreak was preventable. Those who opt out of vaccinating their children place other vulnerable members of the population at greater risk for exposure. This isn't about removing choice; this is about protecting those who have NO choice. The 3 week old infant with whooping cough that I cared for during my residency at OHSU died a miserable death after many invasive interventions performed to save her life; neither she nor her family had a choice as she was too young to be vaccinated for whooping cough. She relied on those around her to be vaccinated so that she could be protected, and we failed her.

Families who choose not to vaccinate their children can still choose not to do so – they should just not have the privilege of using a public entity such as school, thereby putting many other children at risk for disease and death. Vaccine exemption rates are skyrocketing in Oregon despite doctors' strong and persistent recommendations to vaccinate, as well as strong evidence with regard to vaccine efficacy and safety. Right now, 7.5% of children in Oregon are

unvaccinated, putting us below the community immunity threshold and endangering vulnerable populations.

Vaccines save lives. There are few other interventions in modern medicine that have had such a significant impact on decreasing child mortality and morbidity. There have been numerous large well designed studies showing the effectiveness and safety of vaccines. Contrary to popular belief, vaccines don't cause autism, and repeated studies have shown this time after time.

We are facing a public health emergency today. Oregon is seeing the impact of high vaccine exemption rates in the Portland area as over 61 individuals have contracted measles, an extremely contagious disease with potentially devastating effects.

I implore the committee to protect children's lives by supporting HB 3063.

Thank you,

Jenny Malcom, MD

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