



Testimony in Support of House Bill 3063

February 28, 2019

Senate Committee on Health Care

Susan S. Pinnock, RN, BSN

Chair Salinas, Vice-Chairs Hayden and Nosse,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 3063 on behalf of the Oregon Nurses Association. My name is Susan Pinnock and I am a Public Health Nurse with Washington County Public Health writing to urge your support of HB 3063, which seeks to remove the non-medical vaccine exemption from Oregon law.

I have been in public health for almost 29 years now and have fought hard to educate families about the importance of vaccines for the protection of their children as well as children around them. Many false news stories have come forward over the years and it has taken many years to try and get families back on board. There was a time when SIDs was blamed on vaccines, Autism continues to be unjustly blamed and now families make up their own excuses because it seems anything goes. Most of these families have not experienced vaccine preventable illnesses so do not have personal experiences that show them the danger of not vaccinating. The recent measles outbreak has begun to open the eyes of some people, but many are still not convinced and a law that allows them to choose not to vaccinate their children for no reason other than personal preference reinforces that the need is not there. For the sake of those children as well as those around them, the law needs to limit vaccine exemption to true medical risk only.

I have a few personal experiences that I often share with families in doubt. My own mother in law suffers from post-polio syndrome. Although I was not around when she had polio, it is very real to me and her suffering has continued into her 80's. Both my children had chicken pox. My son was 3 and my daughter was only 2 weeks old. Caring for a newborn and a 3 year-old that had such a high fever he was hallucinating was not my idea of a good time. If my daughter had not gotten chicken pox I would have had her vaccinated as soon as I could(it was still optional in the early 1990's).My son had whooping cough when he was 13. Although he was vaccinated on the schedule recommended at the time, it was 2003 and we were just learning about the need to give everyone a booster for Pertussis. I stood by his side almost nightly as he coughed so hard I thought he would stop breathing and held my phone in hand ready to call 911 for 3 months. Why would anyone choose to have a child suffer like this? I can't imagine how it would have been had he been an infant.

As a public health nurse I see many newborns who can not yet be protected by vaccines they are not old enough to get, so it is important that anyone who can, should receive these vaccines. I have also worked with many immune compromised infants and children including those with cancer, heart conditions and organ transplants, to name a few, who could not be vaccinated and need herd immunity to offer them protection. Parents are willing to seek care for



these illnesses when they become ill, not minding medical intervention then, yet are not willing to seek vaccines to prevent the suffering from occurring in the first place.

In our community we are working with families and even fighting with some physicians who are making recommendations based on their own personal beliefs that put our families at risk. All exemptions other than true medical exemptions, need to be taken off the table so we can provide protection for all.

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. We are fortunate that it has not been more wide spread, but it may not be over.

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. This should not be a choice.

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. **ONA urges your support for HB 3063**

Thank you,

Susan S. Pinnock RN BSN