

To Whom it May Concern,

I would like to voice my opposition to HB 3063.

First off, I would like to start off by saying that my husband and I both believe that vaccines are good for public health, and their advent has helped control and eradicate diseases. We would never deny their efficacy.

That said, I have a unique family history when it comes to vaccines, specifically the DTaP/TDaP/DTP vaccine. My uncle was vaccinated as a child and on his booster shot of the pertussis vaccine, he developed a high fever and encephalitis. The result was irreversible brain damage and epilepsy. My uncle was mentally handicapped from that moment forward. He never lived on his own. He never held a job. And, a few years ago on New Year's Eve, he passed away at an early age due to complications of his condition.

My parents were cautious with the pertussis vaccine when it came to my sisters and me, but they also still believed in the importance of vaccines. They chose to have doctors give my oldest sister a quarter dose of the pertussis vaccine and watch for her reaction. Within minutes, my sister's leg began to swell, and doctors told my parents to never give her nor my other sister nor me the vaccine.

Our own daughters are a few generations removed now from my uncle, but we - for obvious reasons - face the same hesitation with the vaccine that my parents did. In speaking with our pediatrician, he recommended us to an allergist to see if they would give us a partial dose. But, the allergist could not test us for the vaccine since the reaction that occurred in my uncle is not an allergic reaction. As of now, neither the allergist nor our pediatrician feels comfortable vaccinating our children with the vaccine because none of us can predict the outcome for our daughters.

Next week we register our oldest daughter for kindergarten in our local public school in Sherwood. If HB3063 passes, our daughter would be excluded from attending. We do not qualify for a medical exemption because in order to qualify, we would have to have a documented reaction to the vaccine with at least one of my daughters. In order to receive the medical exemption, we would have to decide which daughter would be the guinea pig in our experiment. We have no way to determine whether or not our daughters would react the same way my sister or my uncle did.

Our daughter entering kindergarten is beautiful and bright. She is reading books, spelling words by sounding them out, counting to well over one hundred, and she is intensely creative. Last week she decided to fashion a pair of shoes out of paper and made a pair that fit her and stayed on her feet and looked like a pair of ballet flats. She has been counting down the years to go to school, ever since she was two and a half and discovered that school meant you could learn new things all day long.

While I realize that our story may be unique, I know that countless other families are watching this decision with trepidation. We will have to decide between a public education for our children and our children's health. It would be foolish of me to assume that we are the only family in Oregon to have a unique medical history that causes concern for vaccines yet excludes us from medical exemptions.

Please read this with the heart that it is meant. I grew up going to Oregon public schools. I was a Valedictorian when I graduated from Tigard High School, and I went on to graduate magna cum laude

from Boston University's College of Communication. I believe that Oregon public schools provide an amazing educational opportunity for our children to learn and succeed.

I also know that HB 3063 would create an unfair disadvantage to families like mine with complex medical histories. While my family is blessed to have a two-parent household, there are others out there who are low income and/or single parent families who have no option for education besides public school. A single mom struggling to make ends meet cannot afford to send her children to a private school nor could she quit her job to stay home and home school her children.

I am pleading with you on behalf of families like mine. Until you create an environment where we can, without a reasonable doubt, guarantee that vaccines will be safe for children like mine or can create medical exemptions that include my children, please don't pass HB 3063. Please do not make families like mine choose between our children's health and education.

Thank you for your time and all of your hard work sorting through the many stories you are reading.

Sincerely,
Melanie Vallely

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