

Thank you, Madame Chair—I'm Senator Jeff Golden, representing District 3, most of the Rogue Valley to the California border.

As I talk to supporters of this legislation I'm clear the primary impetus behind it is an authentic commitment to sound public health practices in general and the well-being of our children in particular. The recent incidence of some 50 cases of measles on both sides of the river in the Metro area has now fueled this debate in ways that rarely lead to good public policy. I'm here to convey the deep concerns of more and more of my constituents about where this is going.

I think we might be getting this conversation very wrong. I'm especially bothered by how quickly, sometimes contemptuously, those questioning our vaccine protocols are dismissed as zealous flakes who don't know what they're talking about and deny clear science. I don't doubt that you've met people like that—I even hear that legislators have been stalked or flamed online by a few people like that. But I'm **very** clear that doesn't describe everyone who speaks out against mandatory vaccines. Some of them, including some physicians and parents with of vaccine-injured children, are anything but ignorant; they have researched these topics with care and intellectual honesty, and most of them are NOT what's been called "anti-vaxxers"—they do vaccinate their children for some diseases. Here are five questions they're asking that in my view deserve better answers than they've received:

1. Why does this conversation about forcing vaccination so quickly veer to the notion that you're either FOR or AGAINST vaccinations? Personally, when I venture into this conversation in this building the response is often "What about smallpox? What about polio? Look what those vaccines have done for us!" I don't hear from people who dispute that. But we've reached a point where it's common to vaccinate babies for Hepatitis B and 9-year-olds for HPV. Those aren't airborne diseases; they're sexually transmitted. Can we assure our citizens they won't be coerced into those kinds of vaccinations as well?
2. What about the combinations of vaccine often administered at once because it's convenient and because our kids don't want to go get stuck multiple times, and we don't want to torment them more than we have to? Do we want to put the burden of proof about safety issues on concerned parents, and if not, do we actually have solid, longitudinal peer-reviewed research that completely invalidates concerns about the **interaction** of different vaccines injected at the same time?
3. If they are invalid--if we KNOW our vaccine protocols are perfectly safe, and fears to the contrary are just wrong, what are we to make of the \$4 Billion in damages paid out by the Vaccine Injury Compensation program in the last 30 years (according to the US Health Resources and Services Administration)? Much of the support for mandatory vaccination comes out of the vital concern for immuno-compromised children who can't be safely vaccinated. With this law, are we showing proportionate concern for the significant

number of children with vaccine injuries, or are we thinking of them as unfortunate collateral damage?

4. This is a magazine advertisement from 1947. "DDT is good for me." I wish I could say this is the only time when the industrial, government and scientific establishments went so wrong in endorsing the complete safety of a lucrative product, but it's actually one entry on a list that is not short. There are good-faith scientific shortfalls and bad-faith political dynamics that have caused us to get human health protection wrong again and again. The question my constituents would ask is "Faced with the pressure of a staggeringly profitable and powerful pharmaceutical industry and federal agencies that have shown their vulnerability to that pressure, are we rushing towards the same kind of mistake again?"
5. There are a lot of other questions, mostly exceeding my scientific competence, but let me end with this one. In 1986, Congress passed the National Childhood Vaccine Injury Act to shield the corporations manufacturing vaccines from any liability for the effects of their products. That led to an explosion of the recommended vaccination list from five entries in the 1960s to 24 in the 1980s to over 70 today. **If your child is injured by a vaccine, you can't sue the pharmaceutical corporation that manufactured it.** That has my constituents saying "Let me get this straight: you want to ban my children from school if I don't inject them with substances that deeply concern me, telling me that my fears are baseless because we know this is safe medicine...and, by the way, the corporations that make and profit from them won't legally stand behind them if something happens?" The principle these folks ask me to stand by is NO MANDATES FOR LIABILITY-PROTECTED PRODUCTS. Is that an unreasonable stand?

I don't have answers to all these questions. What I would ask is, do you? If not, I'd ask two final questions on behalf of my constituents: can we move forward in good conscience to ban children from public school if they're not vaccinated with a growing list of substances? And are you confident that we can't find less sweeping and authoritarian options for dealing with situations like the multiple cases of measles in the Metro area?

To be as clear just once more: I believe in the value of many vaccines for protecting our children. A solid majority of the people I represent would agree that they have important benefits. At the same time, on behalf of those same people, I ask you to consider the possibility that this particular bill could cause us to look back in ten or fifteen years, as we have before with too many products that rack up massive special-interest profits as we ignored those who questioned their longterm effects, and say "what were we thinking?"

Thank you.

Senator Jeff Golden, Oregon District 5