



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

February 28, 2019

Chair Salinas and Colleagues on the House Health Care Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB 3063. I can't claim to be a great writer. Roald Dahl was a great writer, authoring some of the classics of children's literature, including James and the Giant Peach, which he dedicated to his daughter, Olivia. Sadly, Olivia died in 1962 from measles, before a vaccine was widely available.

When he came to the hospital, Mr. Dahl found her body still burning with the fever that killed her. I think only someone who has lost a child can understand what he went through. In 1988, Mr. Dahl wrote about her death and what he hoped parents would do when anti-vaccination sentiment broke out in England -

“There is today something that parents can do to make sure that this sort of tragedy does not happen to a child of theirs. They can insist that their child is immunized against measles. I was unable to do that for Olivia in 1962 because in those days a reliable measles vaccine had not been discovered. Today a good and safe vaccine is available to every family and all you have to do is to ask your doctor to administer it.

It is not yet generally accepted that measles can be a dangerous illness. Believe me, it is. In my opinion parents who now refuse to have their children immunized are putting the lives of those children at risk. In America, where measles immunization is compulsory, measles, like smallpox, has been virtually wiped out.”

Tragically, Mr. Dahl's words are no longer true. The non-medical exemption rate in our schools has risen above 7.5%. That puts schools in aggregate below the herd immunity necessary to protect children from measles, polio, and pertussis. Of course, some schools far exceed that level. My daughter's school, Roosevelt Middle School, has a 10% non-medical exemption rate. My son's school, Camas Ridge, in my district, has a 14% opt out rate. My nephew goes to school in a building with a 37% non-medical exemption rate. There are public schools where the opt out rate is close to 50%. The preschool with the highest opt out rate is at 77%. There is a private school with a 79% opt out rate. I respect a parent's choice not to vaccinate, but our children cannot all be held hostage to that choice. Our schools cannot become places that kill our children. I hope that you will hear Roald Dahl's plea and move HB 3063 with a do pass recommendation.

Signed,

Marty Wilde

