

DATE February 27, 2019

TO Oregon State Legislature, Senate Committee on Health Care

Re: Support for HB 3063

Honorable Chair and Committee Members,

I am Dr. Alanna Braun, a general pediatrician with OHSU, from Portland, writing to urge your support of HB 3063, which seeks to remove the non-medical vaccine exemption from Oregon law.

We live in communities that care about keeping kids safe. We put kids in car seats, even though sometimes they cry when you buckle them in. We're mindful of kids' allergies when planning our child's birthday party. And we vaccinate to protect kids from serious and preventable diseases.

In medical school I learned that vaccines teach our immune systems to fight off infections before we get exposed to those diseases, which means they make us stronger. If we do get exposed to, say, the measles, we don't get sick if we have already gotten our vaccine. Unfortunately, as we see from situations like the current measles outbreak in Clark County, as fewer people are vaccinated the risk of outbreaks of these serious and preventable diseases grows. These outbreaks put the most vulnerable at risk – babies, people with cancer, and anyone with a weakened immune system.

With House Bill 3063 we have a new chance to protect our children and our communities. It is our responsibility to band together to protect children and those who cannot protect themselves. Vaccines are safe, extremely well studied and protect us and our children from diseases that devastated the United States only a few short generations ago. In the 1960s, prior to the MMR vaccine, 3-4 million Americans per year got the measles, and of those thousands were hospitalized.

As a pediatrician, vaccines are one of the few things I recommend without hesitation. Pediatricians do not make money from vaccines. We recommend them because they have made and continue to make our communities safer. The misinformation that continues to be spread about this incredible, life-saving tool has led many loving and well-intentioned families to decline vaccines; this breaks my heart. I hope those families know that as pediatricians we share with them the goal to keep their children happy and healthy, and would never recommend something that we thought would cause their children harm.

During my training to become a pediatrician, I took care of a child who eventually passed away from a late complication of the measles called subacute sclerosing panencephalitis. He was born in another country where the measles was common and contracted the disease as an infant. I took care of young babies who had been too young to receive the pertussis vaccine, and caught that disease from unvaccinated people in their community. Some of those children spent weeks in the hospital struggling to breathe in our intensive care unit; some did not leave. As we have become

less familiar with these diseases – largely as a result of vaccinations – we have forgotten how lucky we are to have such amazing shields to protect us.

I ask the committee to protect children’s lives. Please support HB 3063.

Thank you,

Alanna Braun, MD
Oregon Health & Science University