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February 27, 2019

TO Oregon State Legislature, House Committee on Health Care

Re: Support for HB 3063

Honorable Chair and Committee Members,

My name is Dr. John Peoples and I am a pediatrician who cares for children in Central Oregon, including Bend, Redmond, Madras, La Pine, Prineville and outlying communities. I strongly ask for your support of HB 3063, which removes the non-medical immunization exemption and requires children attending public school to receive appropriate immunizations as outlined by the Oregon Health Authority and the Centers for Disease Control. As a community pediatrician, the most critical work I do is administer vaccines to prevent severe illness.

Immunization hesitancy has become an issue we increasingly confront as pediatricians. As preventable diseases such as measles, pertussis, and tetanus have decreased with systemic immunization, many have forgotten the serious health risk these diseases still pose. These have obviously been at the forefront recently with the measles outbreak in the Pacific Northwest. Immunization rates in Oregon, and especially Deschutes County, have dropped significantly over the past 20 years. As a result, we are seeing an increasing emergence of vaccine preventable disease. This sadly places immunocompromised children and adults at great risk, as well as infants who do not yet have the opportunity to receive protection. Research has demonstrated that 95% of the community needs to be vaccinated in order to reach community immunity. Since California passed a law in 2015 removing non-medical exemption for immunization, the state has noted an increase in vaccination rates from 92.8% to 95.1% in two school years.

Vaccines have substantial evidence supporting their safety and efficacy. An Institute of Medicine review of over 1,000 research articles found that adverse events related to vaccines are mild and most children have no side effects. Additionally, no link has been demonstrated between immunization and either diabetes or autism. It has been shown that annually, vaccines in the United States alone prevent 20 million cases of disease and over 40,000 early deaths!

The risks of not protecting the most vulnerable among us are profound. Parents will still be able to choose whether or not to vaccinate their children. But importantly, this bill will ensure that children who are vulnerable do not have to go to school in an environment which endangers their health. I have personally seen children with both severe illness and death from diseases which could have been avoided with appropriate vaccination. We must stop ignoring the most profound public health advancement in the 20th century, and allow our children who attend public school to do so safely.

Please support HB 3063.

Sincerely,

John D. Peoples, MD FAAP



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