

Dear Committee on Health Care Members,

I am the mother of two children, ages 13 and 15, in the Eugene 4J school district. For K-8, my children have attended the Village School, a Waldorf inspired public charter school. The Village School has, I believe (even for Oregon, and even for Eugene), a disproportionately large number of unvaccinated children. Approximately five years ago, whooping cough spread through the school. Almost all of the children who contracted the illness were unvaccinated. My eldest son, who was about ten (and who was vaccinated), also contracted whooping cough. (Interestingly, at the time I was informed by my son's pediatrician that the AAP had recently realized that the booster schedule for the whooping cough vaccine was insufficient and needed to be moved up.) My son spent a miserable, sleepless week out of school (and I with him, out of work). Fortunately, because my son is healthy, has no underlying lung conditions, and was partially protected by the vaccine, he did not experience any long term sequelae from the illness; but there are many children for whom exposure to such an illness could have serious, life-altering consequences. If non-medical exemptions to required vaccines had not been allowed, the outbreak likely would not have occurred (and certainly would have been less widespread). The recent measles outbreaks in various parts of the country highlight the risks of allowing unvaccinated children to attend public schools.

The immunization issue clearly pits two competing rights against each other, and they are mutually exclusive. In this instance, I believe strongly that the rights of those parents whose beliefs are supported by science and experts in the field should be given priority over the rights of parents whose beliefs are informed by misinformation and unfounded fear. Please work to move this bill through Congress so that all Oregon children can attend school without the fear of being exposed to preventable and potentially devastating illnesses.

Sincerely,  
Ashley Wolfe