

Submitter: Emma Pickett
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Health Care
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1598

Greetings to the Oregon legislature.

As a mother of two, nothing is more important to me than my children's health and safety. As a science educator, supporting governance informed by evidence-based thinking is also incredibly important to me. In both of these roles I am submitting my hearty support for increasing access to immunization generally, and for SB 1598 in particular.

Each fall, at the beginning of what I jokingly call "germ season", I get my family vaccinated as soon as we can to keep them safe, healthy, and at work/in school as much as possible. Though our health is generally good (thankfully!), some members of our family suffer from conditions that make them extra vulnerable to respiratory infection. Getting a shot isn't fun, but being vaccinated brings lots of peace of mind especially as the school year begins (Legislators with kids, I'm sure you get it).

This fall was a little bit different. On the one hand, Oregon had just entered into the Western Health Alliance, empowering our state to make immunization decisions based on evidence as opposed to whatever anti-science ideology was coming out of Washington DC. This was a fantastic move for Oregonians, and I was hopeful that it would make getting our annual COVID boosters easier! The reality on the ground, however, was very different. Nobody seemed to know what was happening. Different doctors offices had different information on when boosters would be available--and to whom. Vaccination appointments would be scheduled by pharmacies but then cancelled. Folks were getting turned away from appointments as ineligible. And this was for adults; pediatric vaccine availability was even more bleak. And with the CDC headed by someone who doesn't even believe in germ theory, it was clear that there wasn't going to be any meaningful help or guidance coming from the federal government anytime soon!

My family's health is my top priority, so I kept at it. After copious amounts of research, numerous frustrating phone calls, and a number of wild goose chases, we ultimately decided to drive up to Washington State to receive our boosters. To add insult to injury, we had to pay for them out of pocket. Our family is reasonably healthy, tech-savvy, informed, and educated. We aren't rich by any means, but we are well resourced enough that this inconvenience and expense was not going to ruin us. We are luckier than most, and have a lot to be grateful for. The whole drive up and back, though, all I could think of was that if it was this hard for OUR family to get appropriate, science-backed, and VITAL preventative healthcare, what chance did

less fortunate Oregonians have?

The science is super clear here. Vaccines are safe and effective! The policy move should be clear as well. SB 1598 isn't forcing anyone to go out and get a shot that they don't want. It just provides clear guidance and access to those of us who do.

Passing this bill would be an easy way to make sure every Oregonian can choose preventative care that is appropriate for them and their families.

Thank you for your hard work, and your attention to my testimony.