

Submitter:

Ryan Hassan

On Behalf Of:

Committee:

Senate Committee On Health Care

Measure, Appointment or Topic:

SB1598

To the Senate Committee On Health Care,

I am a pediatrician practicing in Tigard writing in support of SB 1598. This bill would reduce barriers to vaccines for those who want them, promoting people's freedom to choose to get themselves and their children vaccinated, improving vaccination rates in our state, and reducing unnecessary illnesses, lost work and school time, hospitalizations, and medical costs.

Last fall, my clinic had to charge patients \$200 up front for COVID vaccines when we weren't sure whether the insurers would reimburse us for the cost of the vaccines, which we have to pay up front. Fortunately, we were able to later reimburse those patients, but there were several who couldn't get the vaccine even though they wanted to because of the cost barrier. Other clinics in the metro area have stopped offering some vaccines entirely due to the uncertainties around reimbursement that make providing vaccines potentially unaffordable. With ongoing changes to vaccine recommendations and regulations from the federal government, which so far have not been based in science, this kind of uncertainty is sure to continue.

I've had other patients who needed vaccines but couldn't get them through our office for one reason or another and needed prescriptions from us to get them done at their local pharmacy. This unnecessary barrier is a waste of time I could be spending providing actual patient care, and that my patients could be spending living their lives. It also means it's people are less likely to get the vaccines that are recommended for them because they can't just walk in and get them when they happen to be at a pharmacy.

My patients deserve to know that the vaccines they want to protect themselves from unnecessary illness will be affordable and available to them. This bill will ensure that health insurers will continue to cover the vaccines that keep Oregonians healthy, and that people who want vaccines can get them from vaccinators without unnecessary barriers. Last year there were thousands of cases of measles and pertussis across the country, the first measles deaths in the US in a decade, over a thousand cases of pertussis in Oregon, and hundreds of children admitted to the ICU for influenza, many of whom required artificial ventilation and even artificial pumping of their hearts. So far this year we've already had 5 cases of measles in Oregon. These diseases are not only completely preventable with vaccination, they are also terrifying to the parents whose children I care for who want nothing more than to keep their children safe and healthy. This bill will make it easier for them to get their children the

vaccines they want and need. SB 1598 would harm no one and benefit all Oregonians. There is no excuse not to pass it.

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