

Submitter: Laura Labarre
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Health Care
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1598

I was registered to give verbal testimony in support of SB1598 at today's hearing (remotely), but unfortunately the hearing ran out of time. I would like to offer up what I was going to say. Vice Chair Patterson said in the hearing that this bill would solve a "future problem." I want to join several panelists in respectfully disagreeing, that is not how it feels to my household. This is a problem happening right now, one that has negatively affected my family. This fall, I tried to procure a COVID booster two weeks in advance of a business trip I needed to take to the east coast at the very beginning of the third week of September. Protection from COVID infection is especially high stakes for my family. I have a chronic sinus condition that gets quite painful and results in severe bacterial infections when I catch most respiratory viruses. One of our senior citizen family members who is highly immune-compromised provides childcare to my two young children. It is critical for our childcare needs and for the health of my family and myself that we avoid acute and dangerous infections like COVID. There was immense and time-consuming confusion about whether or not I could get a vaccine due to debate about my qualification for a prescription, which most pharmacies seemed to think was required at the time. I had three appointments at pharmacies cancelled. Finally, one appointment "stuck" and after a lot of debate and coordinating, my doctor called in a "phone" authorization, which the pharmacy was still confused about and somehow thought was different from a prescription. I spent 2 hours at the pharmacy trying to sort it out for what was meant to be a 15 min appointment. While I finally did succeed in getting the shot, it was only 36 hours before my flight (not enough time for immunity to build--it takes two weeks for protection). Meanwhile, I had tried unsuccessfully to procure COVID boosters for my 5- and 7-year-olds. Also during this period. We experienced the exact same confusion and never successfully got them boosted before my flight. I wore a mask for most of my business trip, but when I came home 48 hours later, my 5-year-old had contracted COVID, spreading it to me. I was sick for three weeks, missed substantial work and even once we were feeling better, we couldn't resume normal childcare routines right away because we couldn't risk the health of our immune-compromised relative. This continued to impact my work. I experienced an acute flare of my sinus condition that has yet to fully resolve. I now require sinus surgery (scheduled for later this month in February), which is quite expensive since I also was laid off right before the holidays due to an employer's catastrophic funding loss. This is just one example of the way the ambiguity and irresponsibility of new federal guidelines can create cascading negative health and financial effects for an extended family, not to mention a burdensome and harmful amount of stress. This bill does not require anyone to vaccinate, it merely paves the way for those of us who choose to

access these lifesaving tools to procure them as we have in decades past. Please support this bill, literal Oregonian lives depend on it.