

Submitter: Jason Flaherty
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Health Care
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1598

Dear Members of the Oregon Senate Committee on Health Care,

I am Jason, an Oregon resident and father who believes health decisions belong between families, their doctors, and God not in the hands of unelected officials. I write in strong opposition to Senate Bill 1598.

As a parent, I work closely with trusted physicians to make informed decisions about my children's health. SB 1598 threatens to undermine that responsibility by centralizing authority over preventive health services in a single appointed Public Health Officer whose future recommendations would automatically trigger insurance mandates and could facilitate school or employment requirements without another legislative vote.

This isn't about being anti-medicine. It's about who decides.

Consider a family whose doctor advises against a particular intervention due to their child's unique medical history. Or parents whose faith leads them to decline a specific service. Under SB 1598, they could face financial penalties or barriers to education not because elected representatives debated and voted, but because one official made a determination. These aren't hypothetical concerns; families across Oregon navigate these tensions regularly.

The bill conflicts with foundational constitutional protections: Oregon Constitution Article I, Section 1 declares all power inherent in the people, yet this concentrates health authority in one unelected position. Article I, Section 3 protects conscience rights, which automatic coverage mandates could easily burden. The U.S. Supreme Court in *Cruzan v. Director, Missouri Department of Health* recognized our protected liberty interest in refusing unwanted medical treatment a right rooted in bodily integrity and personal autonomy.

While the bill claims standing orders "may not require" anyone to receive treatments, the mechanisms for indirect pressure through coverage rules, institutional policies, and economic incentives remain real concerns. The distinction between direct mandates and structural coercion matters less to families facing difficult choices.

Oregon is a state of independent thinkers. True unity comes when we respect each family's freedom to pursue voluntary, informed care without imposed uniformity. Rejecting SB 1598 would reaffirm that Oregon trusts parents, honors physicians'

clinical judgment, and keeps government power accountable to the people.

I respectfully urge you to vote no on SB 1598. If improving access to preventive care is the goal, let's explore voluntary programs that expand options rather than centralize control. Oregon deserves laws that honor individual choice, safeguard conscience, and keep the most intimate health decisions personal not mandated from Salem.

Thank you for your consideration and for upholding the values that make Oregon home.

Sincerely,
Jason
Oregon