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

As a concerned citizen of Oregon, I strongly oppose Senate Bill 1598 (SB 1598), which expands the authority of the Public Health Officer—an appointed position under the Oregon Health Authority—to mandate coverage for immunizations and issue standing orders for prescriptions related to infectious or noninfectious diseases. While framed as ensuring access to preventive services by aligning with federal guidelines up to June 30, 2025, and requiring health plans to cover officer-recommended immunizations without cost-sharing, this bill consolidates dangerous power in one unelected individual. It creates a healthcare monopoly vulnerable to political influence, misinformation, activism, and corruption. Oregonians deserve decentralized, accountable medicine—not a top-down "health monarchy" overriding thousands of doctors statewide.

#### Centralizing Power in One Appointed Official: A Recipe for Abuse

SB 1598 empowers the Public Health Officer, appointed by the Governor, to issue "evidence-based recommendations" for immunizations that private health plans must cover, and to authorize standing orders for prescriptions to "control, prevent, mitigate, or treat" any disease deemed a public health concern—without strong legislative checks or patient recourse. This concentrates immense control in one person, susceptible to the appointing Governor's party, lobbyists, or biases. Appointed officials can be swayed by partisan agendas or special interests, leading to mandates driven by activism over science.

The risks are clear: Misinformation could spread if recommendations rely on flawed or ideologically skewed "evidence." Political activism might prioritize goals over individual needs, forcing controversial treatments amid debates. Corruption looms—without accountability, this role could favor pharmaceutical profits over families' choices and premiums. Declaring an "emergency" for immediate effect bypasses scrutiny, entrenching this unaccountable monopoly.

History warns us: During COVID, lockdowns and rights infringements stemmed from false information and leaders' opinions that later proved wrong. Power was abused for gain, as it has been before—and history repeats unless we stop it. We the people say NO.

Maxine Dexter, a medical doctor and Oregon House member, stated on July 31, 2021: "It's time to mandate vaccinations to participate in society." Such views from influential figures highlight the mindset behind bills like SB 1598—pushing top-down

mandates that erode personal freedoms under the guise of public good.

Oregon champions progressive values, especially women's reproductive rights, insisting abortion decisions remain between doctor and patient, free from government interference. Yet SB 1598 overrides every licensed physician's judgment on preventive care and immunizations, substituting directives from one appointed "czar." How can we uphold bodily autonomy in one sphere while destroying it in another? This inserts bureaucracy into medical relationships, potentially conflicting with informed consent. It's hypocritical overreach betraying Oregon's principles of choice and medical freedom.

Democrats decry concentrated power with "no kings," yet SB 1598 grants ultimate control over healthcare decisions to one unelected official with zero personal liability or accountability. No clear challenge mechanisms exist for flawed recommendations, no repercussions if mandates harm, and no voter recourse for an appointed role. This is a de facto medical monarchy, insulated from democracy. If we oppose kings, why empower a czar dictating policy from above?

SB 1598 isn't about access—it's about control. It risks higher costs and undermines Oregon's medical expertise. Demand transparency, accountability, and respect for rights over surrender to political manipulation. Vote no on 1598 to preserve decisions between doctors and patients, not a solitary political appointee. Oregon should reject this authoritarian slide in the name of public health.