

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

Dear Chair and Members of the Senate Committee on Health Care,

I am writing as a concerned Oregon resident and Portland voter to respectfully **\*\*oppose SB 1598\*\*** in its current form. While I support affordable access to evidence-based preventive care, this bill represents unnecessary government overreach, risks higher health insurance costs for families, and shifts critical medical decision-making away from individuals, parents, doctors, and the full Legislative Assembly toward a single unelected administrator.

Key concerns include:

1. **\*\*Expanded Authority for Standing Orders Without Sufficient Oversight\*\***

The bill authorizes the Public Health Officer (or a designated physician) to issue broad standing orders for prescriptions to "control, prevent, mitigate, or treat" infectious or noninfectious diseases and other public health concerns. Although the language states orders may not "require" receipt or administration, history shows such tools can enable de facto pressures—through employer policies, school attendance rules, insurance incentives, or public health campaigns—that limit true choice. Past Oregon Health Authority emergency rules during COVID-19 demonstrated how similar mechanisms led to widespread job losses and exclusions for non-compliance. Concentrating this power in one office, without requiring legislative approval for each major application, erodes democratic accountability and personal bodily autonomy.

2. **\*\*Locking Preventive Coverage to a Specific Federal Date and Adding State-Level Immunization Recommendations\*\***

Tying no-cost coverage for preventive services to federal rules as of June 30, 2025, may seem protective, but it risks freezing coverage in place even if federal guidance or science evolves. More troubling, requiring plans to cover future immunizations "recommended by the Public Health Officer" (based on external guidance) could force insurers to add new mandates without full legislative debate or cost analysis. This could drive up premiums for all Oregonians—especially small businesses and individuals—without proven statewide need or input from affected families.

3. **\*\*Unjustified Emergency Clause\*\***

Declaring an emergency to make the bill effective immediately upon the Governor's signature bypasses normal public process and debate. There is no immediate crisis

justifying this; the measure appears politically motivated as a preemptive response to potential federal changes, rather than a response to urgent Oregon-specific threats.

Oregonians value personal freedom, including the right to make informed medical decisions with their doctors and families. This bill risks undermining that by expanding administrative power in ways that could indirectly coerce compliance. Better alternatives exist: maintain current preventive coverage standards through regular legislative review, require transparency and legislative oversight for any broad standing orders, and avoid emergency declarations for non-emergent policy shifts. I urge the Committee to vote "Do Not Pass" on SB 1598 or amend it significantly to restore checks and balances, protect individual choice, and prevent unnecessary cost increases.

Thank you for your time and consideration.