

Submitter:

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On Behalf Of:

Committee:

Senate Committee On Health Care

Measure, Appointment or Topic:

SB1598

I am both a pediatrician and a pediatric ICU doctor, which means I care for the children of Oregon at their sickest- those who need breathing tubes, ventilators, and full organ support. I do not give vaccines in my practice. Rather, I care for the hundreds of children who get admitted to the ICU every year with vaccine preventable illnesses such as influenza, RSV, and meningitis. Very few people in this room have seen how vaccine preventable illnesses harm children and families. I see it everyday.

I am here today to support SB1598 to protect access to vaccines for those who want them. You may hear from opponents of this bill about the importance of choice. But choice HAS to go both ways. Choice is an illusion if families who want to be vaccinated cannot access them due to financial or logistical barriers. This bill still champions choice- it does not require anyone to have an immunization they do not want for themselves or their child. But for those who CHOOSE to be vaccinated, this bill goes a long way to ensuring it will be covered by insurance and remain accessible. New federal guidelines to prevent illness in children are not evidence based and put additional costs and barriers in place for families who feel confident about wanting the recommended immunization schedule. Families with means will be able to overcome these barriers. But families of little means will not. In many ways, SB1598 is a social justice bill ensuring we do not create a class of families who want to be vaccinated but simply cant.

How does this all play out in real life? Lets talk about influenza. Last year this nation saw nearly 300 children die from influenza, most of whom were previously healthy and unvaccinated. I bore witness to two of those deaths and know I will see many more of these preventable deaths in my career. It used to be if a family wanted a flu shot, it was guaranteed to be covered by insurance- they didnt have to worry about cost. Unless SB1598 is passed, giving our public health system authority to mandate coverage, there is no guarantee this shot will be covered after 2026. It used to be that if a family wanted to get a flu shot, they could access them at local pharmacies or flu shot drives. Under new federal guidelines- a family must undergo shared decision making with a provider to access this vaccine. Unless SB1598 is passed, allowing OR to prevent these roadblocks, families will need to schedule appointments, take a half day off of work, and organize transportation to get vaccines that they already know they want. This is something that is difficult or impossible for many families.

I do have some concerns regarding relying on a single public health officer to carry this authority in isolation. I would recommend reconsideration of this language to ensure that regardless of who is in that role, immunization practices that are

supported by credible professional societies are followed such as from the AAP, ACOG, etc. Relying on the judgement of a single person places our preventative public health infrastructure at risk.

Thank you to this committee for considering SB1598- a bill that truly champions healthcare choice by ensuring that cost and access are not a barrier for those who choose to vaccinate their families. Thank you.

Wendy Hasson MD

Oregon Pediatric Society Board Member