

Senator Sara Gelsler Blouin
Senate District 8
Chair, Senate Human Services Committee
Senate Majority Whip



February 24, 2026

Dear Chair Nosse and Members of the House Health Care Committee,

Thank you for scheduling SB 1598 for a public hearing. This is an important technical bill that is necessary to preserve the flexible, affordable access Oregonians have long enjoyed when seeking vaccines for preventable illnesses like influenza.

Until recently, most of us have been able to make an appointment to get an immunization we want to receive at our local pharmacy. For me, that means I can get myself and my son the influenza and COVID-19 vaccines we choose to receive on a Saturday at the same time I get groceries from my local Safeway. This means I don't have to take a day off work, I don't have to pay a co-pay for an office visit and I don't have to find two different days to go sit in a physician's waiting room to get permission to receive routine care.

Last fall, this infrastructure broke down. Our pharmacies had vaccines. People wanted to get these vaccines. They were eligible to get these vaccines. However, federal action removed the mechanism that allowed pharmacist to provide those vaccines and new guidance limited eligibility for some people. My office was flooded with calls and emails from older constituents, constituents with cancer and constituents with disabilities that didn't understand why they would have to drive to Washington to get a vaccine they had always been able to get for free at a local pharmacy.

SB 1598 fixes this problem by allowing a pharmacist to provide these vaccines **to people who want to receive them.** The technical term for this is a "standing order," which is a term that's come under a great deal of scrutiny.

To be clear, the "standing order" is not an order TO Oregonians to get an immunization they don't wish to receive. Rather, in this context, **the "standing order" is better understood as a "permission slip" that allows a pharmacist to act within the scope of their license to administer a vaccine to those who are deemed eligible under that statewide "order."** It does not change the protocols and patient-provider relationship that has always and will continue to occur.

In short, this use of the word "order" in SB 1598 is more akin to placing an order for a pizza rather than ordering someone to take a particular action.

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No one is required to get any vaccine they don't want under this bill. However, SB 1598 does remove unnecessary barriers to care for those who have decided that this is how they want to maintain their own health.

The importance of this bill for my community cannot be overstated. With one recent health care merger and another in progress, there is an exodus of primary care providers from my district. In just the past two months, we've lost obstetrics and gynecology and pediatrics from the Corvallis Clinic and watched family doctors leave the area. As a result, like many in my district, my entire family and I no longer have a primary care physician because ours left the area in the wake of one of the mergers. Thus far, finding primary care providers with openings for new patients has been an insurmountable challenge. We do not know who will do routine care for our family or who will write prescription refills. Without this bill, we also don't know who our family could visit to get the vaccines we want and that my medically vulnerable adult son needs. We are not alone—this is playing out in household after household in my district.

Although SB 1598 does not fix all the problems with health care access, it is a critical step forward. Without this bill, thousands of people may be denied ready access to the preventive care they want to receive because of the ongoing pace of federal changes. In my district, if they can't receive these preventive immunizations, more individuals will fall ill at the same time they are grappling with the loss of access to a primary care doctor. This will cost my constituents time and increased costs for urgent care and ER visits. More importantly, it will lead some to be sick when they don't have to be.

SB 1598 is a simple measure that ensures every Oregonian can access the care they want in convenient locations without unnecessary costs or additional physician visits. Oregon should have the same tools other states do so we can act nimbly and comprehensibly to support patients and providers *when necessary*. That is what SB 1598 offer.

I hope you will vote YES on this "*permission slip bill*". It is crucial to ensure all our constituents have permission to get the health care they need, the health care they choose, and the health care they've relied on for years.

Sincerely,



Sara Gelsner Blouin
Oregon State Senator