

Submitter: Wendy Hasson  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: House Committee On Health Care  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1598

My name is Dr. Wendy Hasson and 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 have seen how vaccine preventable illnesses harm children and families. I see it everyday.

I 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. I support 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 remains accessible without requiring a hard to come by appointment with their doctor for mandatory shared decision making that they don't need. 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.

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. Last year in my ICU alone, we had children on ventilators for 167 collective days for influenza. 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 by insurance companies, 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- if they can even get one-, 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 both families and the healthcare system. Oregon is facing a massive primary care shortage. We do not have enough appointments available for primary care as it is, mandating an appointment with a doctor for a flu vaccine is simply an impossibility and people who want the flu vaccine will go without,

putting them at risk for hospitalization and death due to provider scarcity- not choice. The standing orders allowed by SB1598 will allow those who want the vaccine to access it easily and locally. People who feel they need a doctors visit for shared decision making are still welcome to do so.

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.