

Submitter: Ian Wiltz
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Health Care
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1598

Chair Nosse, Vice chairs, and Members of the Committee,
My name is Ian Wiltz, and I am here today as a high school student in Oregon. I want to be clear: this testimony is coming from the youth. We are the generation that will live longest with the public health systems you shape today. We are the students sitting in classrooms during outbreaks. We are the young workers in grocery stores and childcare centers. We are the future parents who will depend on whether this state chose prevention or chose politics. We have a stake in this.

This bill does not mandate vaccination. What it does is remove financial barriers and bureaucratic delay. It ensures that if someone chooses prevention, their insurance will not stand as a barrier.

Preventive care is not wasteful spending — it is responsible governance. Vaccines cost exponentially less than emergency room visits, ICU stays, or long-term complications from preventable diseases. When we fail to invest in prevention, we pay for it later — financially and at human cost. Covering vaccines without cost-sharing reduces strain on families and stabilizes the healthcare system as a whole. That is a fiscally sound policy.

As for autonomy: access does not eliminate choice. It protects it. Personal freedom means nothing if it only exists for those who can afford it. This bill preserves individual decision-making while ensuring that cost and red tape are not the deciding factors.

And we cannot ignore the national context. We are witnessing efforts to weaken long-standing vaccine requirements and scale back public health protections. When policy makers advocate for cutting vaccine safeguards, it fuels distrust and creates real risk — especially for children and immunocompromised communities. In times like this, states have a responsibility to lead with evidence, not ideology.

Oregon has long prided itself on science-based policy. SB 1598 continues that legacy. It requires evidence-based recommendations, transparency from the Oregon Health Authority, and clear safeguards. It allows this state to respond quickly to emerging public health threats instead of waiting for outdated statutes to catch up with science.

My generation has already lived through the consequences of public health failure. We have watched schools close, watched families struggle, watched misinformation spread faster than viruses with nothing we could do. We understand what is at stake. We are asking you to choose prevention. We are asking you to choose evidence. We are asking you to choose long-term stability over short-term politics. Passing SB 1598 sends a message that Oregon will remain the Oregon we know and love — a state that leads by example, protects its communities, and stands up for science-driven, equitable public health.

I urge you to support this bill.
Thank you for your time.