

Submitter: Sinead Hough
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 Sinead Hough, and I am here today as a high school student from Northwest Portland.

As a youth in Oregon, I fully support Senate Bill 1598. The youth of Oregon are the ones who will grow up into the systems we choose to create. We are directly affected by vaccine access. We are at ideal ages to receive vaccines that could end up saving our lives, such as meningitis and HPV vaccination. Our future health in this state depends on this committee's action to widen vaccine access.

The impacts of preventative care cannot be understated. Compared to treating conditions after they arise, preventative care is cheaper, faster, and less painful. It is critical that when we legislate for the future of Oregon, we prioritize preventive care. Vaccines like HPV can prevent cancer. 99% percent of cervical cancer and 60% of oropharyngeal cancer are caused by HPV. Imagine all of the pain of going through surgery and chemotherapy and paying for treatment that could be prevented if we expand vaccine access.

The youth of Oregon want to grow up into a state that prioritizes our health. We are becoming adults and navigating being independent. Representatives, you do not want vaccination to end up neglected during this transition. Last month, my 19-year old sister was forced to pay 400 dollars out of pocket to get her federally recommended vaccines. She is lucky because she is able to afford it, but without this bill many people like my sister will not be able to get vaccinated. We must prioritize vaccine access for the sake of the youth of Oregon.

This bill is especially important in Oregon. Oregon is one of the most vaccine misinformed states in the country. In my experience advocating for HPV vaccination, people haven't learned the importance of vaccination. When people are already on the fence about vaccines, high cost can be the factor that keeps people from getting vaccinated. Let's lower the barrier to entry to getting vaccinated by passing this bill. Not a single county in Oregon reaches a high enough percentage of vaccination for herd immunity. Children across Oregon, both immunocompromised and vaccinated, are put at risk every time they go to school. I am no different. This situation requires immediate action. This very bill is an important step to increase vaccination and keep Oregon youth safe.

The club I lead at my high school focuses on cancer prevention, and when advocating for HPV vaccination, no out-of-pocket cost can be a major motivator for people to get vaccinated. My peers are all highly involved and passionate about disease prevention. We have seen our loved ones die of preventative causes. We want to see a change. By all accounts, vaccines are a miracle. They save millions of lives every year. We should allow all Oregonians to access vaccines, regardless of their socioeconomic status. Oregon's future health depends on this committee's action to widen vaccine access. Committee Members, I urge you to support senate bill 1598.

Thank you for your time and consideration.