



Oregon Public Health Association

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April 23, 2019

Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Human Services
900 Court St. NE,
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Co-Chair Beyer, Co-Chair Nosse and Members of the Sub-Committee:

I'm writing today to express the Oregon Public Health Association's support for House Bill 3063 and urge you to vote yes on this important piece of public health legislation.

Since 1944, OPHA has worked to ensure all Oregonians have quality public health services and policies that protect, promote and preserve their health, regardless of who they are or where they live. We have over 475 members across the state representing all components of our public health system: doctors, nurses, dentists, researchers, faculty, students, community leaders, and state and local public health professionals.

Falling vaccination rates represent a real public health threat to Oregonians of all ages. Vaccines have been given to billions of people worldwide, saving millions of lives and preventing a tremendous disease burden (1). Vaccines are safe and effective, going through more rigorous research and testing than other FDA approved pharmaceuticals (2). Make no mistake, the diseases vaccines prevent are still out there and reappear quickly when vaccination rates drop.

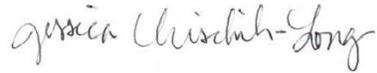
The world is seeing the dramatic effects of a drop in vaccination coverage play out in Venezuela and its neighbors. Previously eradicated vaccine preventable diseases like measles and diphtheria are spreading rapidly across communities with low vaccination coverage. This fall, a one-year old child with measles traveled to Amazonas, Brazil with her family to an area with low vaccination coverage. Eight months later, there are more than 10,000 cases of measles in that state with more than 170 new cases per week. The Pan American Health Organization blames this outbreak on low vaccination rates, which left pockets of susceptible population (3).

In Oregon, 7.5% of children in kindergarten are unvaccinated. The community level of immunization required to prevent a measles outbreak, for example, is greater than 90% (4). With pockets of disease continuing to appear in the US and around the world, Oregonians are vulnerable to outbreaks. Individuals who exempt their children from vaccinations for non-medical reasons place other children at risk of catching and spreading preventable disease and put our community immunity at risk. When the threshold of immunity gets too low, all of us become more vulnerable to disease. Individuals with compromised immune systems, infants and those suffering from harmful conditions who have no protection against certain diseases are particularly at risk. As a conscientious society, it is our responsibility to protect those who cannot protect themselves, who have no choice.

HB 3063 will eliminate the non-medical exemption from school immunization law and, in doing so, will raise immunization rates and save lives. It is good public policy that will promote good public health. OPHA encourages this Committee to support the passage of this legislation.

On behalf of our membership,

Sincerely,



Jessica Nischik-Long, MPH
Executive Director

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1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Measles & Rubella Move Fast. August 30, 2017, <https://www.cdc.gov/globalhealth/measles/default.htm>.
 2. New York State Department of Health. The Science Behind Vaccine Research and Testing. July 2014. https://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/immunization/vaccine_safety/science.htm
 3. Faiola A, Lopes M, Krygier R. 'Venezuela's crisis has become our own.' The Washington Post. October 31, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/world/wp/2018/10/31/feature/as-venezuelas-health-system-collapses-disease-spreads-beyond-its-borders/?utm_term=.9df4aa98bb91
 4. Fox, JP. Herd Immunity and Measles. *Reviews of Infectious Diseases*. 1983. May-June;5(3):463-466. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/6879000>