



**Testimony Before the
Senate Health Care Committee regarding SB 442
Presented by James K. Lace, MD
on behalf of the Oregon Medical Association and the Oregon Pediatric Society
February 18, 2015**

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Dr. James Lace and I am the chair of the Legislative Committee of the Oregon Medical Association and a member of the Oregon Pediatric Society. I have been a practicing pediatrician in Salem for 38 years.

In 2014, the CDC non-medical immunization exemption rate for Oregon kindergartners placed Oregon dead last in the nation, with an exemption rate of 7.1 percent. This rate has grown exponentially in the last 15 years- less than 1 percent of all Oregon kindergartners were exempt in 2000. The rate is directly correlated to Oregon being one of the most lenient states on vaccine exemptions.

The decrease in the number of children vaccinated against diseases like measles and pertussis is directly correlated to an increase in the number of cases of those conditions in Oregon. For example, in 2012, over 800 cases of pertussis were documented, the highest rate seen in Oregon since the 1950s. By 2014, the lowest number of exemptions for Oregon kindergartners was for the DTap vaccine, which inoculates against whooping cough. No child should have to suffer a disease that could have been prevented and it should not take the resurgence of a disease to convince parents to vaccinate their children. Currently only 2 states have in law medical exemptions for routine vaccines, Mississippi and West Virginia. Oregon would be the 3rd state to allow only medical exemptions for routine pediatric vaccines.

Immunizations are an effective way to keep our children, families and communities safe and healthy. When approximately 94 percent of all school-age children are immunized, lower rates of measles, pertussis and other vaccine-preventable diseases are seen and children who cannot be immunized due to age or medical conditions are protected from preventable diseases.

The OMA supports the removal of non-medical exemptions from Oregon law. As a practicing pediatrician, I have supported Oregon's attempts to tighten up existing non-medical exemption laws (such as SB 132 in 2013) and am disappointed that Oregon's laws have not had the success seen in Washington, under similar laws. Oregon is now 1.1 percent over the threshold for many preventable diseases, highest among them, measles (Oregon Health Authority data). This places all Oregon children at an increased risk and could result in an outbreak that would be difficult to contain to a few isolated cases. In light of this, I strongly support SB 442 with the -3 amendment as a bill that has the potential to decrease Oregon's non-medical exemption rate and re-establish community immunity that protects all Oregon children as well as infants, the elderly and those with compromised immune systems.

I would like to thank you once again for the opportunity to address the committee regarding this very important topic and I'm happy to answer any questions.

The Oregon Medical Association is an organization of over 7,500 physicians, physician assistants, and medical students organized to serve and support physicians in their efforts to improve the health of Oregonians. Additional information can be found at www.theOMA.org.

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