

Testimony submitted on February 18, 2015 re SB-442

My name is Dr. Jennifer Margulis, Ph.D. I am an award-winning author and researcher and I have been writing books, magazine articles, and newspaper articles, about issues related to childhood health for over ten years.

I grew up in a house full of scientists: My uncle, Sheldon Glashow, won a Noble Prize in Physics and my mother, Lynn Margulis, was one of the most important evolutionary biologists of the 20th century. I suspect I am also one of the most vaccinated people sitting in this room. I was fully vaccinated as a kid, I worked on a child survival campaign in West Africa in the 1990s and received an additional round of vaccines and, most recently, I was awarded a Fulbright grant by the United States government in 2006 – 2007 to teach and do research in Niger, one of the poorest countries in the world, necessitating even more vaccines.

I am pro-vaccine. I think vaccines are one of the most important medical inventions of our time. Yet I am appearing before you to tell you that I am opposed to SB-442 and to any attempt to take away philosophical and religious exemptions from Oregon parents who decide not to vaccinate their children. For me this is not a debate about the merits of vaccines, the harm vaccines cause in a subset of vulnerable children, or whether or not the current CDC schedule is really in the best interests of our children's health, it is a debate about freedom and parental choice.

There is no place for forced vaccination in a free society.

Parents must have the right to choose to do what is best for their children.

The only two versions of the MMR vaccine available today contain human diploid lung fibroblasts, which are cells that were grown from aborted fetal tissue. Religious parents who do not want to inject their children with aborted fetal tissue cells should have the right to forgo vaccines made in this way.

Three of the polio vaccines currently on the market contain cells grown from African green monkeys. Parents opposed to animal cruelty, those who are vegan, and those who do not want the cells of other animals injected into their children should have the right to forgo these vaccines.

Thousands of scientific studies have shown that a human baby's immune system benefits tremendously from human breast milk. One study from the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences showed that infants who were breastfed had a 20 percent lower risk of dying before they turned one than babies who were not. Other studies have shown that breastfeeding—more than access to clean water and vaccines—helps children survive and thrive.

Given the overwhelming evidence of the positive benefits of breastfeeding, should we also legislate that American women breastfeed their babies? And exclude any children from public school if they have not been breastfed?