

I am writing because I'm concerned about HB 3063, which is a proposal to remove all non-medical exemptions for children to attend school or childcare in the State of Oregon.

It is a form of religious discrimination because it bars access to education and childcare for children in families who have religious opposition to vaccinations. This law pressures some parents to make decisions against their moral conscious because they are concerned about their children not getting an education or not being able to work because they can't get childcare.

It is a form of medical discrimination because it bars access to education and childcare for children who have medical reasons to not vaccinate that are not included in the CDC/ACIP's officially accepted list of medical contraindications to vaccination. Even if a medically trained doctor thinks there is a reason to not vaccinate a child, they cannot write a vaccine exemption letter for that child unless that reason is on the CDC/ACIP's list. This is problematic because the CDC/ACIP cannot take into account all individual medical situations. People can die or be permanently injured when medical procedures and recommendations are applied in a one size fits all approach instead of being individualized with their chosen medical provider. This law pressures some parents to make medical decisions that they see as risky, because again they are concerned about their children not getting an education or not being able to work because they can't get childcare.

I think our government's resources would be better spent towards encouraging pharmaceutical manufacturing companies to develop vaccines that take into account parent's concerns with them as best possible. There are many different values and issues to tackle here, but we can make progress by making one change at a time. For example, in 1999 Public Health entities encouraged manufactures to remove thimerosal from vaccines as a precautionary measure. The manufacture's cooperated and now this previously widely used preservative is used in very few vaccines. This was a huge step forward because many parents did not want their children injected with vaccines that used this preservative.

One way to potentially increase vaccination rates would be for our government to allow imported vaccines produced without aborted fetal stem cell lines from other countries (for example the MMR vaccine in Japan). If those vaccines were made available in the U.S., families with religious opposition to using vaccines produced with aborted fetal stem cell products would be open to vaccination. Or our government could support U.S. pharmaceutical companies in using existing technology to create new vaccines that don't use aborted fetal cell lines. Those who have religious concerns about using products produced with aborted fetal stem cell lines would be overjoyed to have an alternative that they feel does not compromises their religious values.

An effective, safe and ethical vaccine product will sell itself. Is it really necessary to use strong-arm approaches like those proposed in HB 3063 to increase vaccination rates when there is no true emergency? I ask that you please work with parents, not strong arm them and their children into a one size fits all approach.

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