

February 26, 2019

Oregon State Legislature  
Senate Committee on Health Care  
900 Court St. NE  
Salem Oregon 97301

RE: Please support HB 3063!

Honorable Chair and Committee Members:

My name is Dr. Bronwyn Baz, and I am a pediatrician specializing in hospital medicine in Portland. I am writing to urge your support of HB 3063, which seeks to remove the non-medical vaccine exemption from Oregon law.

I have been a pediatric hospitalist—caring for some of our state’s sickest children—for over ten years. Thanks to anti-vaccine hysteria, propaganda, and a campaign of misinformation, I have seen many children hospitalized with complications from vaccine-preventable illnesses, some of whom will never recover fully.

I have seen an infant stay for weeks in the pediatric ICU requiring frequent resuscitation due to pertussis (whooping cough), which caused her to simply stop breathing (for babies, it’s not “just a cough” as in older kids and adults). Some of these infants end up on life support and don’t survive.

I’ve cared for another unvaccinated baby who required hospitalization and weeks of antibiotics through a long-term IV for a bone infection, a complication of a blood-stream infection from scratching due to varicella (chicken pox). I’ve seen children in the ICU for weeks on tube feeds due to tetanus their parents could have protected them from. I’ve cared for many hospitalized children struggling to breathe due to influenza and pneumonia they didn’t have to have. I’ve held a baby’s hand while he seized repeatedly from a brain abscess from vaccine-preventable meningitis.

Children are among the most vulnerable patients. Pediatricians can often help children who are ill with a vaccine-preventable disease, but not always save them. We have all seen children die. Seeing them suffer and die unnecessarily from vaccine-preventable illness (whether contracted from an unvaccinated contact or because they couldn’t be protected themselves) is agonizing.

Many of us are parents as well as pediatricians. We all vaccinate our children and ourselves. All those who care for children simply want what’s best for them, and that care includes essential preventive medicine such as vaccines, one of the safest and most effective tools in our public medicine arsenal, and one of the triumphs of modern medicine. Moreover, by vaccinating appropriately, we protect vulnerable kids—who can’t receive vaccine protection due to immunodeficiency or other serious medical conditions—as well as infant siblings at risk of being exposed at school and in our community.

Among the most nonsensical lies is that we, or pharmaceutical companies, “push” vaccines for profit: the opposite is true. Vaccines are inexpensive to produce, and many pediatricians actually lose money providing them due to inadequate compensation. Treating vaccine-preventable illnesses and their complications would be far more profitable. We’re in pediatrics because we care about children, not profit.

Please don't succumb to the scare tactics and anecdotal stories, however dramatic, from the anti-vaccination population. Their reports spring from misunderstanding and misinformation, and are not supported by peer-reviewed, scientific evidence. Vaccine science is well-established and widely accepted, and is not controversial in modern allopathic medicine. In over ten years of specializing in pediatric hospital medicine, I have seen many hospitalizations that could have been prevented or mitigated by vaccines, but none due to complications from vaccines. We know from careful study that these complications exist, but are far more rare than complications from the preventable illnesses themselves.

Please do your part to protect public health, and thereby, your most vulnerable Oregonians. Let medical doctors help determine who can safely receive vaccines, or not. Make non-medical vaccine exemptions an artifact of the past, as measles should be: our current public health emergency from this measles epidemic was entirely preventable.

Vaccines save lives. Please support HB 3063!

Thank you,

Bronwyn Baz, MD, FAAP

Pediatric Hospitalist

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