

February 28, 2019

TO: Representative Andrea Salinas, Chair  
House Health Care Committee

FROM: Jay Rosenbloom, MD, PhD  
Pediatrician, Pediatric Associates of the Northwest  
Medical Director, Children's Health Alliance

SUBJECT: HB 3063

The Children's Health Alliance (CHA) is pleased to offer this statement for the record in support of HB 3063, which removes the ability of a parent to decline required immunizations on behalf of a child for reasons other than the child's indicated medical diagnosis. CHA is an association of over 120 independent primary care pediatricians across five counties in the Portland/ Vancouver and Salem Metropolitan areas. CHA pediatricians care for approximately 140,000 children, and are committed to improving the health of all Oregon's children.

The recent measles outbreak has brought about a great deal of media attention to the topic of vaccinations and to the prevention of childhood diseases which had been nearly eradicated from this country. The last 15 years have seen a waxing and waning in vaccine confidence followed by a drop in vaccination rates. Unfortunately, as a direct result, we have seen the recent increase in cases of measles, mumps, and whooping cough. The resurgence of these deadly diseases has finally caught the attention of the general public. Those of us in healthcare have known for some time that a decline in the percentage of the population protected by immunizations would result in increasing numbers of susceptible children who contract and then spread these sometimes deadly diseases.

We now often hear parents express concerns about vaccine safety. When a parent has heard, no matter how unreliable the source, that vaccines can be harmful, that parent may begin to question our recommendations that they vaccinate their children. However well-intentioned, those parents choosing to exempt their children from vaccines, are putting not only their child, but others in the community at risk of serious, yet preventable diseases. Children who are not yet able to receive a vaccine, due to their young age or other medical reason such as a compromised immune system, are at an increased risk of contracting the disease. They rely on the community protecting them by not allowing the disease to resurge and thrive.

Vaccines have been a victim of their own success. They have done such a good job of preventing diseases like measles that many parents of young children don't know how serious it can be to contract the disease the vaccines aim to protect against. There are countless stories of tragedies from acquiring these diseases, but most are being told by the older generation and are often not in the immediate consciousness of today's parents. Many people don't know of all the possible outcomes of diseases like measles. It can cause pneumonia, encephalitis (brain swelling), deafness or even death.

The resurgence of measles has demonstrated the failure of our current exemption model. Parents can choose to withhold vaccinations from their child for any reason, regardless of whether it puts their child, or other children at increased risk. In reality, it is the child who has a medical exemption who cannot be vaccinated and is therefore the one endangered by those who can and choose not to. Many children are immune-compromised from transplantation, chemotherapy, or immune deficiency conditions, and cannot attend public schools due to the substandard vaccine rates and low herd immunity in the community. Removal of the non-medical exemption, and therefore increased vaccination rates for those attending public schools, would protect these children from being unnecessarily exposed to diseases that have previously been eradicated.

We are fortunate to live in a time when public health efforts have been able to target a disease and then eliminate it from our population. Vaccines save millions of lives globally. Those of us in the medical field know the science, statistics and the research. **Vaccines are safe.** We know the dangers of not vaccinating. Many of us have seen children die from vaccine preventable diseases. I encourage everyone to support this legislation as a matter of public interest, public health, and to protect the health and lives of children within our state and beyond its borders.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in writing.





Sandra Vilhauer, MD and Jack Rosenberg, MD  
Pediatrics 503-690-0707

