



Service Employees International Union – Oregon State Council
6401 SE Foster ▪ Portland, OR 97206

February 28th, 2019

Chair Salinas, Vice Chairs Nosse and Hayden, members of the committee:

My name is Ethan Krow and I am offering testimony representing the Service Employees International Union Oregon State Council. On behalf of the more than 80,000 public and private sector workers represented by SEIU local 49 and 503, we urge your support of House Bill 3063. SEIU Local 49 represents more than 13,000 members throughout Oregon and Southwest Washington. Their members include licensed practical nurses, respiratory therapists, radiologic technologists, nursing assistants, phlebotomists, laboratory assistants, customer service representatives, food service workers, housekeeping and many other healthcare classifications. Additionally, SEIU Local 503 represents public health workers here at the state of Oregon.

House Bill 3063 addresses a growing public health threat that directly impacts SEIU members and the communities they serve. Childhood vaccinations protect children and other vulnerable populations from a host of preventable diseases that have historically caused long-term and even fatal health effects. Many of us have never seen these effects because of the success of immunizations in eliminating the impact of these diseases in the United States.

Unfortunately, misinformation has led to a growing trend of children not receiving their recommended vaccinations. According to the Oregon Health Authority, in 2018 7.5 percent of Oregon kindergarten-aged students turned in nonmedical exemption forms meaning they did not receive at least one of the state's required immunizations. That rate has risen over the past three years and is even higher in several Oregon communities. That rate is particularly concerning given that when the vaccination rate in a community falls below 95% it means a loss of herd or group immunity that provides transitive immunity to individuals with health conditions or impaired immune systems that do not allow them to be vaccinated.

In addition, outbreaks of communicable disease have clear costs to the health care system. County health departments and local health providers must respond quickly to outbreaks of such disease, such as the current measles outbreak centered in Vancouver, Washington. The costs of these responses trade off with other priorities for public health spending and drive up the overall costs of care in our health care systems. At a time when it is important to make the necessary investments in ensuring a quality health care workforce and reducing other threats to public health, the prevention of the cost of unnecessary outbreaks of communicable disease is an obvious step for public policy.

We commend the Committee for taking up this important public health legislation and we are proud to offer our support.