

Madam Chair Salinas and all Representatives on the Health Care Committee,

**I am writing to express my strong opposition to HB3063.** The proposal to eliminate religious and philosophical exemptions in Oregon is not only unnecessary but unfair and unethical. It would create discrimination in education and widen the achievement gap. It would coerce/force a small number of people to vaccinate as they have no other way out; but it would strengthen the resolve of most because the decision to forego some (or for a very small percentage all) of the current 22 shots (38 doses) required for K-12 school is *\*not\** a decision made lightly. HB3063 would ultimately serve to foment opposition to vaccines and send Oregon down a slippery slope of undermining parental rights, informed consent and matters relating to bodily integrity.

**I urge you to oppose this measure and stand up for what's right: Freedom of Choice in medical procedures.** Today it is the childhood vaccine schedule that is at stake – but what will be up next week? You are giving away your right to choose what goes into your child's body; giving up control to a state that does not know your child from Joe-Schmoe, conceding to a one-size-fits-all policy where individual genetic susceptibilities or sensitivities are ignored. I have a penicillin allergy. How about penicillin mandates? I react adversely and violently to codein; everyone needs a daily dose if bronchitis hits town. Where would my rights be? I urge you to take a moment and reflect on where you draw the line on state intervention in your life. Maybe it's my family history of having escaped the Soviet occupation of the Baltic States and the horrors of totalitarianism that haunt my interpretation of anything state mandated but once the state seeks to override parental rights, I go into panic mode. I am baffled and bewildered that my first action as a new American citizen has become to lobby for my children's right to a public education at the price of what ought to be a private discussion between me and my care provider. Where there is risk, there must be choice and when something as fundamental as the right to a public education is held hostage in exchange for several injections then the state has gone too far.

It may seem straight forward to impose mandates for school attendance, but **such mandates have a very limited human and physical geography.** The sponsors of this bill express concern that schools are "breeding grounds for disease" and that these shots are essential for "community immunity." This argument completely overlooks the presence of adults in the schools as well as *any other setting children move through in their daily lives.* Most adults are nowhere near as vaccinated as today's children; their childhood vaccines have lost efficacy as most vaccine induced immunity lasts at most a decade. In spite of only children being heavily vaccinated we have not seen the dreaded outbreaks touted with increasing urgency and alarm in mainstream media over the past two decades. The Washington Post reported that measles is so contagious that if an unvaccinated person walks through a room two hours after someone with measles has left, there's a 90% chance that an unvaccinated person will get the disease. In spite of exposures at Portland metro area events such as the MODA Center hockey game in January with over 19,000 in attendance, this prophecy has not materialized. If 9 in 10

unvaccinated people get measles and about 5% of Oregonians do not have protection (either because unvaccinated or the vaccine failed) then 90% of 1,500 susceptible individuals at that hockey game should have caught it. We should see over 1,000 cases. None have materialized.

**There is no crisis in Oregon right now to warrant an emergency bill on this matter.** The system already in place is working. Oregon schools have high vaccination rates for all school required vaccines.<sup>1</sup> Oregon's vaccination rate for MMR – measles being the illness currently touted as an “emergency” at 4 cases out of a population of over 4 million – has been high and consistent since at least 1995. There is no sudden decline in coverage. Measles may be eliminated but it has never been eradicated.<sup>2</sup> This is a very important distinction to make. We see cases every year; yet this year it has become a “national” emergency – right on cue for the legislative session to introduce these draconian bills.<sup>3</sup> Only 2,6% of Oregon's K-12 students are truly unvaccinated and the majority of those who chose to fully exempt do so because of severe vaccine reactions in an older child, yet due to the stringent nature of medical exemptions in Oregon these families have not been able to secure one for their injured child or for siblings.

Most parents who claim exemptions simply chose to forego the controversial newborn hepatitis B shot and/or varicella (chickenpox), both vaccines that very few other industrialized countries offer (much less mandate). If you are short just ONE of the 23 shots required for school in Oregon you are counted as exempt by OHA statistics. This is what skews the overall exemption data for Oregon school children. OHA has itself admitted that exemptions go up as new shots are added to the schedule. Since Oregon requires more vaccines than most states for school attendance, parents with other geographic backgrounds may delay shots until they figure out what their children “need.” This has been the case for me. I grew up in Sweden. Children there get barely half of the shots required by the CDC.<sup>4</sup> I was concerned about the pure number of shots on the American schedule. My hackles went up when I agreed to MMR but my child was given MMRV *without my informed consent*. We do not vaccinate for Varicella in Sweden and I would not have agreed to this combination shot which carries an increased risk of febrile seizures.<sup>5</sup> My oldest child struggled with eczema and gastrointestinal problems her first 6 years of life. Once we stopped vaccinating, the eczema cleared yet she will forever be on

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<sup>1</sup>[https://www.oregon.gov/oha/PH/PREVENTIONWELLNESS/VACCINESIMMUNIZATION/GETTINGIMMUNIZED/Documents/SchLawSum.pdf?fbclid=IwAR2Jq17LINFe9gygDqgHpgGKQTq53On936XhYg9NTyl\\_kTQqaKWhL3pLSXY](https://www.oregon.gov/oha/PH/PREVENTIONWELLNESS/VACCINESIMMUNIZATION/GETTINGIMMUNIZED/Documents/SchLawSum.pdf?fbclid=IwAR2Jq17LINFe9gygDqgHpgGKQTq53On936XhYg9NTyl_kTQqaKWhL3pLSXY)

<sup>2</sup> Eliminated means an illness is no longer being transmitted in a certain limited geographical area. It means the illness is no longer “endemic” to that area and that all cases are either strains from other countries or vaccine strains. (Measles in the US is considered *eliminated* because no cases since 2000 have been the strain endemic to the US but have been strains from another country or the vaccine strain). It does not mean that measles was eradicated and is somehow being “brought back” by those who opt out of the MMR. Eradicated means that the disease is gone, no longer transmitted in the area, country, etc, not even entering from abroad. The only VPD that has been determined eradicated is Smallpox.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/measles/cases-outbreaks.html>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.folkhalsomyndigheten.se/contentassets/f782f28c867c479f8ea0b2ced3e8265a/vaccinationsprogram-met-barn-engelska-16067.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccinesafety/vaccines/mmr/mmr-febrile-seizures.html>

a strict diet to protect her gut. Several common food groups are now triggers. These are not strong enough indicators to get a medical exemption approved even if gastrointestinal disturbances are listed as possible side effects. We have to live with injury and know we won't subject our second child to the same risks. It's a carefully researched and deliberated decision.

Once you dig into the topic of vaccines, learn the history of the childhood diseases, understand how the current vaccination program has shifted the disease burden to age groups less able to cope with these infections, and look at how entangled pharmaceutical investments are in vaccine policy making, then it's impossible to disregard one very poignant fact: Since the National Vaccine Injury Act of 1986, vaccines have been completely void of liability. You cannot sue a vaccine maker. It is inherently wrong to seek to mandate a liability-free product to a captive audience, especially when the number of required shots keeps increasing.

On the whole we are not against vaccines in my family. We believe they have a place in society. However, the schedule has grown to proportions where risks are starting to outweigh benefits and collectively today's children are in poorer health than ever. Are we trading acute disease for chronic illness? The role of vaccines in this context is sorely under-researched and therefore I am writing in opposition to HB3063. The science on vaccines is not settled; science is never settled. To mandate any medical procedure is a gross overstepping of the government and an infringement on our constitutional rights. It directly infringes on Oregon children's right to a free, appropriate, public education. HB3063 has no place in our democratic society, it will backfire in more ways than one.

The bill would have far-reaching fiscal implications for Oregon schools as thousands of families are forced into independent homeschooling and schools lose per-capita funding (a quick estimate: Oregon exemptions are used by about 31,000 students, at about \$13,000 per capita, that is 403,000,000. Even if a generous 40% of families are forced to comply, already underfunded schools stand to lose 240 million). For many families homeschooling is not an option (single parent, split custody households, low income families, families where students rely on IEPs or ESL instruction to mention a few) and for them this bill places undue pressure to subject to a medical procedure with known medical risks.

For those of us who end up homeschooling – how do you purport to monitor our children's non-school ground "geographies", their other public space mobilities? Will they wear identifying armbands? Maybe a special color shirt? Why not a special sticker? History has many examples of segregation which this legislative proposal brings to mind. Where there is risk, there must be choice, true choice, not coerced choice. This is the basic premise of informed consent. To withhold a child's right to a free and appropriate education via mandates is \*not\* the American way.

Thank you for your time, Anna, mother of 2, Eugene