

February 22, 2019

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



Dear Elected Decision-Makers:

I am writing in support of HB 3063 which seeks to remove the non-medical (philosophical) vaccine exemption from Oregon law in order for children to attend school.

I have been a Pediatric Nurse Practitioner for approximately 14 years.

You will likely hear many reasons why vaccines are so important in our society, as this legislation is debated. Here are some of my top reasons:

1. Healthcare spending accounts for 17.9% of our GDP in the U.S. We need to be trimming this cost considerably and one clear way is through science-based preventative medicine. We need to legislate sensible policies that show responsibility with taxpayer dollars. Subsidizing increased illnesses in our population is irresponsible, and this legislation would decrease vaccine-preventable illnesses. As vaccine exemptions increase, we are at risk for more costly outbreaks. Costly in terms of money and suffering.
2. This legislation does not remove freedom from individuals. Parents can still choose to not vaccinate if they have philosophical objections. Rather, this legislation says individuals cannot participate in public school without vaccine protection. This is similar in logic to how children are not permitted to bring dangerous items to school. Is saying “you can’t bring a machete to school” an undue impingement on freedom? To get a driver’s license, you must agree to stop at red lights. Is this rule an impingement on freedom? I argue that this is part of the societal contract. To participate in society, you must play by the rules. If you’re not willing to play by the rules, then you don’t get to participate (i.e. don’t get to attend school in the case of vaccines, or in the latter case, you don’t get a driver’s license). I honor people’s choices on these issues, but recognize that we are interdependent and our choices affect others. Not attending to the needs of others while living in society causes problems.

3. Vulnerable populations, such as newborns, immunocompromised people, people with true medical contraindications to vaccines, and the elderly are at increased risk if they contract vaccine-preventable diseases. In 2015, there were 43,630 live births (i.e. newborns) in Oregon*. As a society, do we want to place these babies at risk by having a low community vaccination rate?

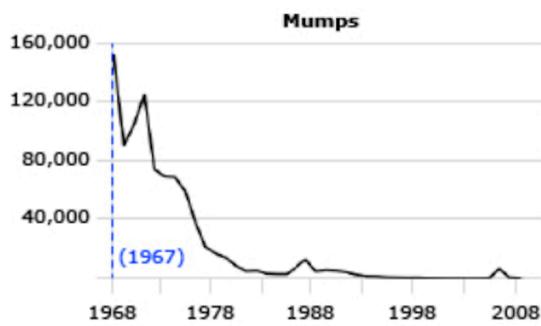
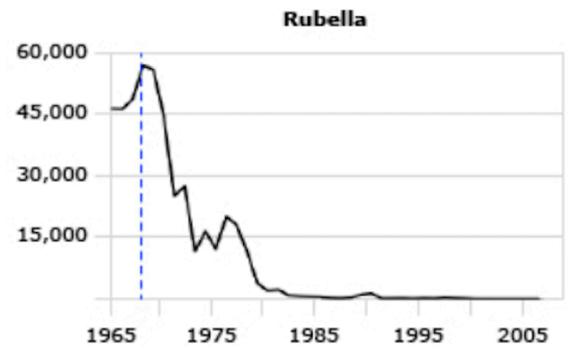
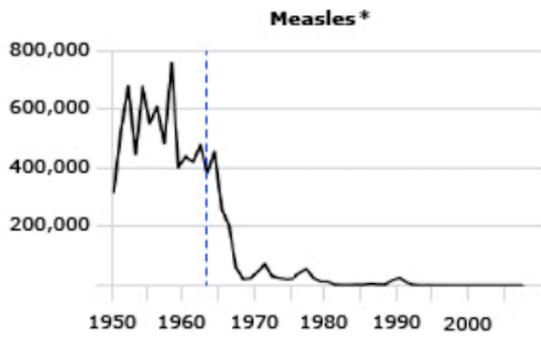
While I desire that school-attending children are vaccinated, I can and do empathize with parents' hesitations and concerns regarding vaccines. It is absolutely possible to empathize with someone, and compromise, while not agreeing with them.

I do not endorse mandatory vaccination. And I believe that families should be worked with when they are vaccine hesitant (not dismissed from a medical practice)... sometimes this means changing the recommended vaccine schedule to something the parents are comfortable with... always working to build a trusting relationship. And by the time they enter group care, they need to be vaccinated to protect the child and the whole. Thankfully, HB 3063 aligns with these precepts.

*<https://www.oregon.gov/OHA/PH/BIRTHDEATHCERTIFICATES/VITALSTATISTICS/ANNUALREPORTS/VOLUME1/Documents/2017/Table0102.pdf>

Thank you for your time,

Jenny Bevacqua, Registered Nurse, Pediatric Nurse Practitioner
Oregon



The blue dotted line (vertical) represents when the vaccine was introduced. Y axis represents population of children. X axis is year.

CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION. EPIDEMIOLOGY AND PREVENTION OF VACCINE-PREVENTABLE DISEASES, 11TH ED, ATKINSON W, WOLFE S, HAMBORSKY J, MCINTYRE L (EDS), PUBLIC HEALTH FOUNDATION, WASHINGTON DC 2009.