

Re: House Bill 3063

From Amber Evans

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Please oppose House Bill 3063, which would remove the religious or philosophical exemptions for even one immunization. Parents are in the best position to determine whether or not their child should be given every single vaccine that is out there. The legislature should focus on the reasons immunizations are important and the safety of immunizations rather than forcing parents to immunize their children against their religious or philosophical concerns. Please vote no against House Bill 3063.

I am writing to you as a concerned Oregon parent and former registered nurse. I am gravely concerned at the loss of religious and philosophical exemptions for vaccination. Aside from the obvious intrusion on parental rights, I am alarmed at the consequences this will have for many children, the school system and even healthcare providers. I worked in the public school system as an RN for eight years and worked additional years as a clinical pediatric nurse. The majority of the student populations I have worked with (over five school districts) were fully vaccinated. The parents that did have exemptions on file were mostly very well educated and had made informed decisions. Most exemptions I have encountered were to accommodate parents that simply wanted an alternative vaccination schedule (with an intention to fully vaccinate) or they simply had an opposition to one single vaccine, not all of them.

I am concerned that this bill would create a burden on schools and on healthcare providers. It will keep many parents from seeking regular medical care for their children. Required medical exemptions puts a tremendous burden on pediatricians and other providers. It creates distrust between patients and their providers. This legislation would be another unfunded mandate. It takes many hours for schools to deal with immunizations and exclusions. In my experience, I have never once had a principal exclude an "out of compliance" student because of immunizations simply because the lost funding for the excluded student is simply too great a financial burden for already struggling schools. It would be far more effective to fund more nurses in schools and provide more public education on vaccinations as a way to increase compliance. Taking away medical choice is only going to create less compliance and more distrust of the government. In fact, in states where this type of legislation has been passed, we have seen many people move away and/or remove their children from schools and public entities as a result of the distrust. We must ask ourselves as legislators, leaders and health care providers, is our goal to come alongside our constituents and fellow citizens in a collaborative manner or is it to cause distrust and animosity which may cause even more problems with compliance? Taking away freedom of choice is not an effective or wise way in increase compliance.

Thank you for your consideration,

Amber Evans