

Dear House Health Committee Member,

Thank you for taking the time to read my testimony as I was unable to travel to the hearing of HB 3063 through all of the snow we have here in Central Oregon. My name is Kristin Bergh, and I am the parent of three children and a former high school biology teacher of 9 years in Oregon public schools. I am very concerned about the long term repercussions of passing HB 3063 in Oregon for reasons that extend beyond vaccine safety.

Oregon has always been an inclusive state. We stand up together for the rights of the minority, even when it makes the majority uncomfortable. From marriage/gender equality to immigration, we have embraced those who think/live differently rather than push people out or build walls. That is who we are and what we do. You are about to vote on another very important issue that impacts a minority in this state, the 2.6% of Oregonian children and their families who fully rely upon non-medical exemptions from vaccinations to attend our public schools. I am asking that you vote NO on HB 3063.

On a number of levels, Oregon cannot afford this mandate. Removing non-medical vaccine exemptions will not bring families with unvaccinated children into compliance. As seen with SB 227 in California, it will push families to either move out of state or for one of the working parents to leave the workforce in order to educate their children from home. The direct result of this will be the potential loss of hundreds of millions of tax dollars from our already struggling schools and state budget. Let's keep the children of this well educated and engaged minority group in our public classrooms and their income tax in our state!

Out of all the hardships Oregon schools are facing, vaccination rates is not one of them. As seen on our states report card, Oregon students are scoring at some of the lowest levels in the nation. I do not believe this is a direct reflection of how hard our school administrators and teachers are working, as they work far beyond the hours they are paid for. However, in the face of a true educational crisis, HB 3063 is going to draw administrative attention away from students needing educational intervention and onto those who are struggling to comply with this proposed vaccination law. From my personal interactions, families choosing not to vaccinate are well educated, intact families who pour a lot of love and careful intention into their children. They are lawyers, doctors, engineers, business owners, professors, police officers, real estate agents, mortgage specialists, teachers, marketing professionals...etc. Their children are not the ones who need the support of our school system the most, it is those coming from broken, struggling, and impoverished homes that face the greatest challenges.

If HB 3063 is truly about children's health, then we need to focus our interventions on the health related issues tearing apart Oregon families and our states educational success. Vaccine preventable diseases such as measles is not one of them. Statistics show that families/schools are struggling to accommodate about 1 in 2 children now facing chronic diseases such as ADD/ADHD, autism, allergies, ear infections, as well as trauma and behavioral disorders. Now compare those statistics with the 4 identified cases of measles in Oregon with not a single case being spread in any public or private school. The numbers speak for themselves, vaccine preventable diseases are not a "state of emergency" issue by any stretch of the imagination. The "state of emergency" is in our Special Education classrooms like that of my sister who is an Oregon elementary teacher and does not have the resources she needs to meet the needs of her health compromised students. What she and other teachers around our state are trying to do, with so much against them is disheartening.

In conclusion, we will not eradicate vaccine-preventable diseases as a state by raising the vaccination rates among our children by 2.6% when the majority of adults are not up to date on their boosters. Let's remove the target currently lasered on eradicating a minority group that brings a lot of value to Oregon's economy and diversifies our population. Let's be consistent in the message we send to our children when we say we are an inclusive state. Instead let's turn our focus and tax dollars towards initiatives that bring people together in the name of community health through nourishing food and educational programs. Let's work together, to keep Oregonians together! Please vote NO on HB 3063.

Sincerely,

Kristin Bergh