

Vaccines are critically important to helping prevent childhood diseases which can have very serious consequences. I have a close friend whose sister suffered permanent brain damage from a childhood case of measles. However, for a small number of children vaccines can also be dangerous. Over the last 10 years the federal vaccine court has averaged about 100 settlements per year to families of vaccine injured children. Given the obstacles to bringing a case to and winning in this court, these settlements are likely just a very small percentage of children who have been permanently harmed by an adverse reaction.

The medical exemptions available today in Oregon are extremely narrow and really only serve children who have already been injured by vaccines. For example, a contraindication for the DtaP vaccination is when a previous dose has caused: "coma, decreased level of consciousness, or prolonged seizures". <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/acip-recs/general-recs/contraindications.html> If coma is a valid reason for a medical exemption, then clearly vaccines are not completely without risk.

For children that are shown by genetic testing to be at high risk, but who haven't already been injured, a non-medical exemption is currently the only choice. Until we have a path to screen for children at risk before giving them vaccines, it is critical that these families have non-medical exemptions as an option. These are families that have no philosophical objection to vaccinations and who know that we should be encouraging all families that can to vaccinate, but who also know that their children are at higher risk of problems than most. It is critical that these families have the ability to make the best choice they can for their own children.

HB 3063 would also remove any ability for religious exemptions as well. Some vaccines are manufactured using fetal tissue and there are some who are rightfully leery of using medications made in such a way. A key value for our state from the beginning has been to provide as much protection for practice of religion as is practical. This is clearly a case where we should defer to religious choice

HB 3063 goes so far as to declare a health "emergency" to trigger immediate effect of the bill. The latest outbreak of measles in Washington led to a total of 4 cases of measles in the entire state of Oregon. Our president has set the unfortunate precedent of declaring an "emergency" when it is politically expedient, and we should not be emulating that example, with false emergencies. Because vaccination rates are high there have been no deaths from measles in the entire US since 2015. However, the CDC site on vaccine side effects lists as events that occur very rarely from the MMR vaccine as "deafness, long-term seizures, coma, and brain damage". <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vac-gen/side-effects.htm#mmr> Clearly the risk from measles is not zero, but neither is the risk of forcing all families to vaccinate. It is inappropriate for the government to require a medication that can cause brain damage even if that happens only very rarely.

Please do not make parents choose between an education and the health of their vulnerable children. Most of these families wanted to follow the vaccine schedule, and in fact had planned to, until these health concerns arose. Vaccine injury is a reality, and non-medical exemptions is the only means available today to protect their at-risk children.

Grant McFarland