

Testimony in Support
HB 3063
Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Human Services
April 24, 2019

Chairpersons Beyer and Nosse and members of the committee. My name is Nancy MacMorris-Adix. I am a registered nurse and a certified nurse midwife. I am Chair of the Oregon Nurses Association Cabinet on Health Policy, and am speaking on behalf of ONA and its 15000 registered nurse members.

I am speaking strongly in favor of HB 3063 to remove non-medical exemptions for vaccines that are required for school attendance. As you know, the success of vaccine programs to protect the public health are predicated on a high percentage of vaccination. Nurses practice based on current evidence in all aspects of care. In the area of vaccines, the evidence shows multiple benefits to vaccination for individuals as well as the public.

Individually, vaccines protect children from common childhood diseases that were once harmful and sometimes fatal to children. Following the evidence based vaccine schedule, protects children from these diseases. Many have forgotten the all too common impacts of childhood diseases such as deafness from measles, male sterility from mumps, paralysis from polio. Because our society has lived nearly free from most of these diseases for nearly 2 generations, we have forgotten their danger.

Vaccines also protect the public by assuring a critical mass of immunity in any given setting. When we look at the current measles outbreak in Clark county, a well vaccinated population would have resulted in no spread of the disease. Children who cannot receive vaccines for either innate immunological compromise or medication induced compromise, are assured of minimal exposure by the high percentage of immunized peers.

As a CNM, I work with pregnant women and their newborns. Both are considered immune-compromised and at risk. Widespread immunization protects these vulnerable populations. Newborns are especially vulnerable as they have undeveloped immune systems and cannot fight disease. They do not receive most vaccines until 2 months of age and don't have full immunity until they complete a series of vaccines between 6 months and 1 year of age. Other vaccines are initiated later, leaving infants vulnerable for longer periods of time. Consequences of these diseases are most serious in infants.

The -18 amendments strengthen the provider-patient relationship by giving the power of signing medical exemptions to the health care provider for a full year. In the past, additional involvement by the public health department was needed and this has been removed. As nurses, we value this change for its recognition that a strong relationship in health care is paramount to trust and healthy dialogue about risks and benefits.

ONA encourages you to vote yes on HB 3063 to protect the safety of pregnant women, newborns and immunocompromised children by removing the non-medical exemption for vaccines that have been proven to be safe and effective. I thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today.