



# Oregon Public Health Association

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DATE: February 27, 2017

TO: Senator Arnie Roblan, Chair  
Members of Senate Education Committee

FR: Jessica Nischik-Long, MPH, Executive Director  
Oregon Public Health Association

RE: SB 274

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The Oregon Public Health Association (OPHA), consisting of students, health educators, doctors, nurses, researchers, professors, community leaders, and citizens who share a commitment to public health in Oregon, urges the Committee to vote **YES on SB 274**. Founded in 1944, OPHA is an affiliate of the American Public Health Association, the largest public health association in the nation, and we are strongly committed to policies that improve health outcomes in all communities. This is why we strongly support SB 274.

SB 274 would expand student access to important information about their healthcare needs, ensuring they know the health risks that a campus environment can pose and the options they have to protect themselves *before* a contagious disease outbreak occurs. For example, the 2015 meningitis outbreak at the University of Oregon could have been better controlled with increased student knowledge of risks and modes of transmission of the disease in addition to the benefits and availability of the State recommended preventative vaccine. Education is a critical tool for preventing the spread of contagious diseases, and the earlier we can educate students, the more likely they are to make responsible decisions about their healthcare. Better informed students will lead to healthier college campuses and, ultimately, healthier communities. Additionally, SB 274 will save colleges and public health departments resources they would otherwise expend in responding to public health outbreaks. In 2015, only 27.2% of Oregon college-aged students, received the flu vaccine or spray [1]. That same year the United States spent over \$5.5 billion dollars in lost productivity due to cases of influenza alone; most of which came from unvaccinated individuals [2].

SB 274 does not tell students to make any particular decision about their healthcare, but it does equip them with facts they can use to make the best decision for themselves. This is an empowering education-centered approach to improving public health and an important tool in the public health toolkit. The Oregon Public Health Association appreciates the opportunity to express our support for SB 274 and looks forward to continuing to work to improve Oregonians' access to healthcare information.

## Sources

1. Oregon Health Authority. Oregon BRFSS Data Immunizations.  
<http://content.healthaffairs.org/content/early/2016/10/07/hlthaff.2016.0462.full.pdf+html>
2. Ozawa, S., Portnoy, A., Getaneh, H, et al. Modeling the Economic Burden of Adult Vaccine-Preventable Diseases In the United States.  
<http://content.healthaffairs.org/content/early/2016/10/07/hlthaff.2016.0462.full.pdf+html>