Health Department

February 18, 2019

Senate Committee on Health Care
900 Court St. NE - HR A
Salem, Oregon 97301

Re: SB 649 - Relating to ingredients in vaccines

Chair Monnes Anderson, Vice Chair Linthicum, and members of the Committee, my name is Paul Lewis. I have practiced pediatrics for 31 years and I serve as the Health Officer for Multnomah County. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today in opposition to SB 649.

This bill does four things; one conflicts with existing Oregon law while the other three are redundant, intend to frighten parents, or both.

First, the bill's parental vaccine consent requirement for anyone under age 18 contradicts ORS 109.640 which allows Oregonians over age 15 to consent to their own medical care. Teens continue to deserve the right to decide on their own whether to access medical treatment. Vaccines that prevent disease should be treated the same way.

Second, the requirement relating to materials on the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) website, including how to obtain exemptions, has been met for many years and is thus unnecessary.[1]

Third, this bill requires that additional unnecessary or potentially misleading information be provided to parents. Current and long-standing practice before childhood vaccination includes verbal consent, signed consent, and provision of Centers for Disease Control and Prevention-approved vaccine information statements in a language the parent reads. Parents are flooded with information and consent forms before vaccines are administered. This bill's additional requirement, providing the "package insert," is particularly unlikely to be helpful to parents. These long package insert documents are

---

[1] Oregon Health Authority. Oregon Immunization Program.
https://www.oregon.gov/oha/PH/PREVENTIONWELLNESS/VACCINESIMMUNIZATION/GETTINGIMMU
NIZED/Pages/SchExemption.aspx

barely readable by medical professionals and not written or formatted for busy parents. Should parents want to read, download, or print these documents, they are widely and freely publically available.

Fourth and most importantly, a provision of the bill requires listing certain chemicals, as specified in ORS 431A.255, that are present in vaccines. This is a list of chemicals of concern in children's products. Of this entire list only one, formaldehyde, is relevant. On its face, providing this list to parents might seem to make sense, but without understanding human biology it is frightening and misleading. Formaldehyde is a widely distributed simple organic molecule with innumerable uses in modern times. For example, formaldehyde exists in the plywood in your home, in the collar of your permanent press shirt or blouse, and in the polish on your fingernails. At high concentrations formaldehyde can be dangerous, but what is less well known is that *your body continuously produces, and eliminates, formaldehyde*. The trace amount of formaldehyde present in some vaccines is far less than the amount already present in the body; any small amounts of formaldehyde in vaccines is promptly detoxified and excreted. The implementation of this bill will frighten parents about a naturally occurring chemical and burden healthcare providers with having to give a lengthy explanation about a vaccine component with no health risk.

At a time when Oregon and Southwest Washington are responding to the largest regional measles outbreak in decades, parents need clear, concise, and accurate information about the safety and efficacy of vaccines. This information is directly provided by healthcare providers and is widely and freely available in the public domain. This bill does nothing to improve parents' understanding of vaccines and has the potential to frighten them into delaying or declining vaccines that protect their child, vulnerable populations, and the wider community.

Please join Multnomah County and the public health community in opposing this bill.

Sincerely,

Paul Lewis, MD, MPH
Multnomah County Health Officer