

DATE 02/27/19

TO Oregon State Legislature, Senate Committee on Health Care

Re: Support for HB 3063

Honorable Chair and Committee Members,

I am Nadav Lelkes, MD, a fellow in Pediatric Hematology and Oncology, a board eligible pediatric hematologist/oncologist and a board-certified pediatrician practicing medicine at Doernbecher Children's Hospital at the Oregon Health and Sciences University. I am writing in support of HB3036, which seeks to remove the non-medical vaccine exemption from Oregon Law.

We are currently experiencing an outbreak of measles in Northern Oregon and Southern Washington, a deadly *preventable* disease. As of a few days ago, there have been 65 confirmed cases of measles linked to the Clark County outbreak and luckily there have been no deaths so far. Unfortunately, I expect that this outbreak is not over, especially as 7.5% of our kindergarten children are unvaccinated, most by parental choice. I worry that we will see children die of the measles, and I worry that one of these children will be my patient, who cannot get vaccinated for medical reasons.

As a pediatric oncologist, I care for children and young adults with cancer, receiving chemotherapy and other immunosuppressing medications, and that have primary immunodeficiencies. These patients *cannot* get vaccines, either because they are dangerous for them or more often they simply will not work. These immunocompromised patients, which can be extended to infants and the elderly, are exactly the reason that we vaccinate the immunocompetent patients. By removing non-medical vaccine exemptions, we will increase vaccination rates in Oregon and protect the members of our society who have no choice. I am not in support of this legislation because I want to remove people's choice, I am writing because my patients have no choice.

Imagine for a moment that you are the parent of one of my patients, say a toddler diagnosed with leukemia, the most common pediatric cancer. You have suffered through a devastating diagnosis, difficult treatment and are now learning to live with your child's diagnosis. Your child is back in school, but you receive the news that one of their classmates has exposed them to the measles. This classmate, unvaccinated by choices their parents have made, will most likely have nothing but minor symptoms. But your child, who has already been through so much, may die because they have contracted a vaccine *preventable* disease. This is the scenario that I fear, and is possible because parents can choose not to vaccinate their healthy children.

Or, what if this child has contracted the measles but you don't know yet. They get a fever, for which we routinely bring our patients to the oncology clinic for. Now, your child has exposed an

entire clinic of immunocompromised patients to a fatal illness, all because parents can choose not to vaccinate their children.

Last, as a parent of a newborn and a medical provider, I fear that I will be exposed to the measles and pass it on to my 5-week-old baby. Sure, I'm vaccinated and will likely be either asymptomatic or have very minor symptoms, but I can still spread the virus to my infant, which could lead to her death. All because parents can choose not to vaccinate their children.

In the same way that we protect the children of Oregon by legislating that they be in age-appropriate car restraints, regardless of parental beliefs, we should protect the children of Oregon by requiring vaccinations in those that can receive them. The risk is minimal, vaccines are safe, and they save lives.

I ask the committee to protect the children of Oregon. Please support HB3063.

Thank you,

Nadav Lelkes, MD

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Member of the American Board of Pediatrics, American Academy of Pediatrics, and American Society of Pediatric Hematology and Oncology