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Testimony in Support of HB 3063

Chair Salinas and members of the committee:

My name is Scott Overton and I am the Oregon PTA president. I am offering testimony in support of House Bill 3063 on behalf of the Oregon PTA.

House Bill 3063 is a necessary step to reduce the growing threat of preventable, communicable diseases among public school students and the general population. Vaccinations are one of the safest, most effective ways to protect the health of our children and our larger communities. Yet Oregon is one of only 18 states that allow unvaccinated students to attend public schools on the basis of a non-medical exemption.

Limiting the non-medical vaccine exemptions for public school students is an effective way to raise immunization rates and protect the public, while also allowing for cases where medical science has shown an individual should not be immunized. When California passed similar legislation in 2015, it saw vaccination rates rise from 92.8% to 95.1% in two school years. Such a rise is critical to achieve herd or community immunization, typically achieved when 95% of the community is vaccinated. Currently in Oregon, that number is around 93% and in some schools the rates of vaccination are much lower – creating a clear risk for the spread of dangerous, preventable diseases.

Unvaccinated students impact the larger student population by reducing herd immunization and creating pathways for the spread of communicable diseases like measles and whooping cough. This puts at risk older adults, infants, and people with weakened immune systems that cannot receive vaccinations. In other words, rejecting or delaying immunizations is not simply a matter of personal parental choice, but impact the entire school system and the surrounding community.

We urge you and the members of the committee to support House Bill 3063 to provide the public with the protection it deserves.

Thank you for your consideration.

Scott Overton
Oregon PTA President
February 27, 2019