

Dear members of Oregon's congress:

I am writing to request that you oppose HB 3063. This bill will strip many students of their right to an education -- a right guaranteed by state law.

This law is said to be in response to a state of emergency surrounding recent measles cases in Washington and Oregon. Forty-some people were reported to have experienced measles and 40-some people are alive and well. Across the country, more than 100 cases have been reported this season. This is in actuality a low number, as most recent years have seen around 200-300 cases of measles.

These incidents of measles and measles exposure are even with a nationwide average of more than a 90% vaccination rate in America's children. There will never be zero cases of measles across our country, especially as people are able to travel across state and country borders, as they should be, but there will likely always continue to be virtually zero people who die from measles in America thanks to our country's amazing use of sanitation and through the ability for our people to access medical care as needed at emergency rooms and urgent-care centers. This is where our money should be sent -- to continue to keep our region clean and healthy and to support access to medical care for all of our people.

In California, where a similar law was passed, they are currently seeing an outbreak of whooping cough in the Los Angeles area among teenage school children. Every one of the 30 children affected were vaccinated for whooping cough. There is no evidence that requiring these vaccinations will keep illness out of schools. This scenario is one example of why. There have also been recent incidents of mumps outbreaks within school settings where all of the children were vaccinated. California's law SB277 allowed for children to be grandfathered in if they had an existing personal belief exemption, as well as allowed for medical exemptions (which are very difficult and expensive to obtain as extensive medical history and testing must be completed and most doctors refuse to give them at all) and children with IEPs may also be able to attend school without having all of the vaccinations required by SB277. This means that un- and under-vaccinated children are still in these schools, yet there have not been outbreaks within schools that include these un- and under-vaccinated children. There is no evidence that removing these children from the school setting will prevent outbreaks and there are already provisions in place that children with exemptions on file be asked to remain home during times that illness is known to be going around the school they attend.

Creating laws to restrict access to one service unless you have first jumped through hoops is discriminatory at best. To mandate any medical choice and to deny services if one does not follow through with that medical choice is coercion, not a choice, especially for the many families who already struggle to keep a roof over their head and are financially unable to educate their children at home. Many of those who currently have philosophical exemptions on file are in reality on a delayed or selective vaccination schedule, often only skipping one vaccination or one dosage of one vaccination. I urge you to look at the reason behind this bill and see that it will ultimately harm our state's children by unnecessarily denying them a public, private or charter-school education and will likely not lead to any fewer cases of measles, nor any other illness covered by vaccination.

Not everyone is financially able to home school and not every body is medically able to receive vaccinations. Please vote no and preserve every child's right to an education. Thank you for hearing these concerns.

Claire Young  
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