

March 14, 2025

Senate Committee On Health Care
Oregon State Senate
900 Court St. NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

Dear Chair Patterson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Mary Garrard and I am an advocate writing to you today in support of Senate Bill 42 and the -1 amendment. Vaccines prevent mass outbreaks, eradicate diseases, and ultimately save lives. But right now, access to vaccines is at risk for many across our state.

I care deeply about access to vaccines in Oregon because when I was growing up in Oregon vaccines were not yet available. My parents didn't let my brothers and me swim in the summer because they were afraid of polio, and rightly so. My mother's sister contracted polio as a young adult and although she lived into her 90s she had progressive leg weakness that eventually required her to use a wheelchair. When the polio vaccine became available, it freed us to enjoy swimming with our friends again.

Oregon's Vaccine Access Program (VAP) is absolutely critical to the health of Oregonians, and right now it is at risk of being significantly underfunded. This kind of massive reduction – currently estimated to be 65-70% of enrolled clinics – will threaten vaccine access statewide and particularly for low-income populations, rural communities, and historically marginalized groups.

This potential funding reduction comes at the worst possible time. Last year, our communities saw the highest number of measles cases in 30 years and the largest pertussis outbreak in the last 50 years with over 1,000 cases. Meanwhile, childhood immunization rates are at the lowest we've seen in Oregon since 2018.

Please take action to protect the health of Oregonians.

Vote yes on Senate Bill 42 and the -1 amendment.

Thank you,

Mary Garrard
Corvallis, Oregon