



March 17, 2025

Senate Committee on Health Care  
Oregon State Legislature  
900 Court St. NE  
Salem, OR 97301

**Re: Support for Senate Bill 42 (-1 Amendment) – Urgent Action Needed to Protect Vaccine Access in Oregon**

Dear Chair Patterson, Vice Chair Hayden, and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the National University of Natural Medicine (NUNM) and our NUNM Health Center, we strongly support Senate Bill 42 and its -1 Amendment, which will provide essential bridge funding for the Oregon Health Authority's Vaccine Access Program. Without this critical funding, the program faces a projected 65-70% reduction in currently enrolled clinics, drastically limiting access to vaccines—particularly for low-income populations, rural communities, and historically marginalized groups.

As an active participant in the Vaccine Access Program, the NUNM Health Center has witnessed firsthand how this program ensures equitable vaccine access. By providing pediatric immunizations at no initial cost to clinics, the program removes financial barriers for both providers and families, ensuring that all children—regardless of insurance status—receive the vaccinations they need.

**The Need for Immediate Action**

The urgency of this funding request cannot be overstated. Oregon is experiencing a public health crisis, with immunization rates at their lowest levels since 2018 and alarming outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases. Last year alone, Oregon saw:

- The highest number of measles cases in 30 years.
- The largest pertussis outbreak in 50 years, with over 1,000 cases.

At a time when vaccine access should be expanding, we cannot afford to see it contract. Senate Bill 42 will provide the necessary bridge funding to sustain and strengthen the Vaccine Access Program while Oregon works toward a long-term, sustainable vaccine finance model.

**Why This Matters to NUNM**

Many naturopathic physicians in Oregon, including those practicing at the NUNM Health Center, serve as primary care providers in small, community-based clinics. Without the Vaccine Access Program, many of these clinics—including ours—would struggle to afford and offer routine vaccinations, leaving gaps in care for families who rely on us. This funding is crucial to ensuring that NDs and other providers can continue to offer immunization services, particularly through the Vaccines for Children (VFC) program. Without it, many of our

patients—especially children from underserved communities—would face increased barriers to receiving life-saving vaccines.

We urge the Oregon Legislature to pass Senate Bill 42 with the -1 Amendment to protect vaccine access across the state. This is a critical step in preventing further outbreaks, improving public health outcomes, and ensuring that all Oregonians, regardless of their financial means, have access to necessary immunizations.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We appreciate your leadership in safeguarding public health, and we stand ready to support this effort in any way we can.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Melanie Henriksen ND, CNM".

Melanie Henriksen, ND, LAc, CNM  
President/CEO  
National University of Natural Medicine