



March 10th, 2025

Dear Chair Patterson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Calliope Taylor and I am the Clinic Coordinator at Evergreen Urgent Care in Portland, Oregon. I am writing to you today in strong support of the -1 amendment to SB 42 and the critical funding it will provide for Oregon's Vaccine Access Program (VAP).

Our clinic serves the population of Portland and the greater Oregon state area. We provide urgent care, primary care and USCIS Immigration Exam services to all members of our community.

The VAP has been a critical component of care for our under or uninsured urgent care patients. Additionally, we provide USCIS I-693 Medical Exams for those seeking to become permanent residents of the United States. The I-693 is a component of the broader immigration process, and is required for most applicants. A component of this exam is ensuring that an applicant is up to date on vaccinations. Many of our applicants have refugee status, and are fleeing dangerous, often violent conditions in their country of origin. For such applicants, the out of pocket cost for the ACIP/CDC required vaccinations can quickly exceed their ability to pay. The VAP is often their only way to get these vaccinations, and continue their path to becoming a naturalized citizen of the United States.

Evergreen applied to the VAP late last year, hoping to be able to provide these vaccines to eligible refugees and remove one barrier to citizenship for them. We have been referring eligible patients and applicants to current VAP clinics for their needs, unnecessarily burdening those clinics with extra work when our healthcare system is already stressed. Unfortunately new clinic enrollment has been paused since July of 2023 due to uncertainty of future funding for the program. Nevertheless we have taken the steps necessary to make our clinic meet or exceed VAP clinic standards so that at a moment's notice we will be ready to complete enrollment and begin providing vaccinations to our community.

We have been fortunate to be able to assist many of our patients and their children receive vaccination through the VAP that they would have been otherwise unable to access. Likewise we have been pleased to assist in the immigration process for over

800 applicants through the medical exam process and have been told many times that vaccine cost would be an insurmountable barrier if it were not for VAP partnered clinics.

Without the funding proposed in SB 42-1, Oregon faces a potential 65-70% reduction in participating clinics, of which there are currently over 300. Rural communities which already experience health care access challenges would be most impacted. For our community, this would mean many refugees would be unable to continue their immigration process, families would have to make impossible choices between vaccinating their children and covering other necessary expenses, and the already stressed public health infrastructure would be weakened further.

The timing couldn't be more crucial. In 2024, Oregon saw its highest number of measles cases in 30 years and over 1,000 pertussis cases - the largest outbreak in 50 years. Our pediatric immunization rates are at their lowest since 2018. We cannot afford to lose this vital program now.

SB 42-1's \$5 million allocation for vaccine purchases and \$1.8 million for program administration represents a smart investment in Oregon's public health infrastructure. Because the program replenishes immunization funds through quarterly billing, this one-time investment in the purchase of vaccines will have lasting benefits for our communities. Additionally, the Oregon Health Authority has committed to continuing the work the Vaccine Finance Reform Steering Committee began last year to explore more sustainable models for vaccine financing that the state could implement in the future.

I urge you to support SB 42 and the -1 amendment to protect access to vital immunization services for Oregonians.

Sincerely,

Calliope Taylor
Clinical Coordinator
Evergreen Urgent Care

503-479-7713
ctaylor@evergreenurgent.com