

3/19/25

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 Laura Balestreri and I am a pediatrician in Southern Oregon 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 I have seen the devastation that vaccine-preventable diseases can cause in our youngest citizens. I have personally taken care of babies struggling to breathe due to pertussis. I have seen children suffer with the aftermath of meningitis. I have seen children die from influenza. I work at a Federally Qualified Health Center, where all my patients receive vaccines free of charge. My patients could not afford vaccines otherwise.

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,

Laura Balestreri, MD
Ashland, OR