

Date March 25, 2025

TO: The Honorable Senator Patterson, Chair
Senate Committee on Health Care

FROM: Naomi Adeline-Biggs, Director
Public Health Division
Oregon Health Authority

SUBJECT: Senate Bill 42, Vaccine Access Program

Chair Patterson and members of the committee:

On behalf of the Oregon Immunization Program within the Public Health Division at the Oregon Health Authority, we are pleased to provide information about Senate Bill 42.

The Vaccine Access Program (VAP) was established in 2003 as a state-funded initiative designed to ensure that all Oregonians—regardless of insurance status—can access life-saving vaccines. The program is designed to support safety net providers, including local public health clinics, Federally Qualified Health Centers, Tribes, and School-Based Health Centers, who serve some of Oregon’s most vulnerable populations.

The need for this program is clear. Without VAP, many of these providers would struggle to stock and administer vaccines due to high up-front costs, leading to missed immunization opportunities and greater risk of vaccine-preventable diseases spreading in our communities. This is especially critical for uninsured individuals and those covered by the Oregon Health Plan (OHP), for whom access to routine immunizations is often limited.

Currently, 300 providers participate in the program, but enrollment is paused due to funding constraints. 50 additional clinics and pharmacies are on a waitlist, unable to participate due to limited resources and operations being at full capacity. The

program is unable to expand to meet the growing demand for vaccines in Oregon's communities.

Rising costs and increasing demand have pushed the VAP program to its limits. Senate Bill 42 provides a fiscally responsible approach to sustaining the VAP, with two essential funding components:

- A one-time \$5M investment for vaccine costs to buffer increasing costs and new products coming to market. This funding ensures providers can access vaccines without upfront barriers. Once clinics administer vaccines, they bill payors for reimbursement and repay OHA for the cost of the vaccines, replenishing these funds and maintaining the program's financial sustainability.
- Operational funding of \$1.8M that would allow for enrollment of the 50 VAP-waitlisted clinics and pharmacies, as well as additional new providers, and provide ongoing support and technical assistance for all VAP sites.

Together, the funding request in SB 42 would stabilize the program, maintain access for those who rely on it, and ensure providers can continue delivering essential immunization services.

At a time when Oregon has some of the highest vaccine exemption rates for school-aged children, we cannot afford to let immunization access decline further. Gaps in vaccine access increase the risk of outbreaks of vaccine-preventable disease, putting children, families, and communities at risk.

In closing, continued support for the Vaccine Access Program is vital to protecting public health, preventing disease outbreaks, and ensuring that all Oregonians—regardless of income or insurance status—have access to life-saving vaccines.