

Health Department

March 25, 2025

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

Re: SB 42-2 - Funding for Oregon's Vaccine Access Program (VAP)

Chair Patterson, Vice-Chair Hayden, and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to express Multnomah County's support for SB 42 and -2 amendment which allocates funding to the Vaccine Access Program and continues the work of the Vaccine Finance Reform Steering Committee.

The Vaccine Access Program has been essential to the Multnomah County Health Department's Community Immunization Program's ability to provide timely vaccinations to people in our community. The Community Immunization Program's (CIP) client base primarily consists of youth ages 3 months to 19 years old and newly arrived immigrants. The Vaccine Access Program allows us to provide school-required vaccines—including those for measles, chickenpox, polio, and other preventable diseases. CIP also provides other important vaccines, such as flu and COVID-19 vaccines, to vulnerable residents. During the first eight months of the current fiscal year, CIP administered roughly 1,500 doses of vaccine to school-aged children. Without support provided by the Vaccine Access Program, CIP would not be able to offer these vaccines to school-aged children who do not have insurance. Lack of vaccination makes children vulnerable to various communicable diseases.

In Oregon, every third Wednesday of February is School Exclusion Day. Children who are not up to date on their school-required vaccines can no longer attend school until they have met the school vaccine requirements. Children most impacted by Exclusion Days are typically uninsured or recently arrived in this country. This year, over 60% of clients vaccinated at CIP clinics on Exclusion Day listed English as their second language. This fiscal year, funding provided by the Vaccine Access Program allowed CIP to vaccinate approximately 820 children. The Vaccine Access Program is integral to supporting the cognitive and social-emotional development of the youngest Oregonians.

Without the funding proposed in SB 42-2, Oregon faces a potential 65-70% reduction in participating clinics, of which there are currently over 300. For our community, this would increase barriers to access vaccines for residents, as we are one of the few VAP programs in Multnomah County. Failure to fund this proposal would also make

Multnomah County more vulnerable to disease outbreaks due to a decrease in the vaccination of vulnerable populations.

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 42-2'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 -2 amendment to protect access to vital immunization services for Oregonians.

Please reach out to me if you have any further questions.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Kirsten Aird", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Kirsten Aird, MPH
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