

DATE: 3/27/2025

TO: Senator Patterson, Chair
Senator Hayden, Vice Chair
Members of the Senate Committee on Healthcare

FROM: Jaide Farr, DO

SUBJECT: Support for SB 42: Protecting Oregon's Vaccine Access Program

My name is Dr. Jaide Farr, and I am a pediatrician practicing in Portland, Oregon. As a pediatrician, I am committed to improving the health and well-being of all Oregon children. I write in strong support of Senate Bill 42, which will give crucial funding to our state's Vaccine Access Program (VAP).

The VAP has been essential to Oregon's ability to provide timely vaccinations to children because it eliminates the up-front costs of purchasing vaccines, and provides them at a lower bulk-rate price. 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.

The timing couldn't be more important. In 2024, Oregon saw its highest number of measles cases in 30 years and more than 1,000 pertussis cases, the largest outbreak in 50 years. As an early career pediatrician, it is alarming to me that I will be caring for patients with vaccine-preventable diseases such as measles, which many of my educators and mentors have never treated. Additionally, with our pediatric immunization rates at their lowest since 2018, herd immunity—one of public health's greatest tools—is declining. Young infants and children with certain diseases rely heavily on herd immunity to keep them healthy. It is heartbreaking to listen to parents of a newborn share their fears about these outbreaks, knowing there is very little they can do to protect their baby. It is even harder to admit these babies to the ICU. Each vaccine given helps bolster herd immunity and keeps our communities healthier. The Vaccine Access Program helps ensure that vaccines are available to everybody who desires them. 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 in 2024 to explore more sustainable models for vaccine financing that the state could implement in the future.

I urge you to vote for SB 42 and the -1 amendment to protect access to vital immunization services for Oregonian children. Thank you for prioritizing public and children's health.