

March 27, 2025

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

Dear Chair Patterson and Members of the Committee,

I'm writing to you today as a public health advocate with experience navigating vaccine access in Oregon. I ask that you support Senate Bill 42 and ensure that Oregon's Vaccine Access Program (VAP) has the funding it needs to ensure equitable access to vaccines in our state.

Senate Bill 42 allocates funding necessary to continue VAP and enroll the current waitlist. Without this funding, the program is facing a reduction of 65-70% of enrolled clinics. This means losing access points in areas that desperately need it.

I have a unique perspective on this issue, because I work as an immunization service provider at a local public health authority. Part of this work involves operating a safety net immunization clinic—an access point for people who cannot get their vaccines anywhere else. The clinic would not be able to provide this service without VAP.

I can tell you that there are already large gaps in vaccine accessibility. Our clinic sees huge numbers of clients who are uninsured, BIPOC, non-English speaking, or otherwise facing challenges navigating a complex health system. They also see clients who already have a doctor's office, but that office is on the VAP waitlist and cannot afford to provide vaccines. I mention this to illustrate that even current VAP funding is not enough to secure vaccine access—our communities certainly cannot afford to reduce it further.

Not only are immunizations an important component of preventing communicable disease spread, but they are required to attend school and child care or immigrate to the U.S. Vaccine inaccessibility creates huge equity problems for already marginalized populations, leading to children missing school and delaying the path to legal status. Supporting VAP actively supports health and social equity.

Unfortunately, due to budget constraints at the state and local level, our local public health authority may be eliminating their immunization clinic in July. Should this happen, there would be NO safety net clinic left in our area. Federally qualified health centers have months-long waitlists for appointments, and there are barriers to accessing large health systems such as Kaiser and OHSU. Supporting smaller providers through VAP will be essential in protecting vaccine access for the Portland metropolitan area.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter. Now is the worst time to defund vaccine access. Please take action to protect the health of Oregonians.

Vote yes on Senate Bill 42 and the -2 amendment.

Thank you,

Jennie Cuddeback