

Submitter: kevin Walsh
On Behalf Of: our communities
Committee: Senate Committee On Health Care
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1598

I am writing to support SB1598. I am a retired family medicine physician who practiced for 39 years with the most vulnerable of our population in rural communities in central Washington. During the COVID pandemic I saw hundreds of patients and administered many hundreds of vaccines. Vaccine hesitancy and refusal are issues I encountered frequently. Whether it was in response to a patient's concerns about a vaccine or about their high blood pressure, I tried to explain the issue in a way they could understand so they could make an informed decision for themselves and their children. A patient's trust is foundational to being a healer and caregiver.

My read of this bill is that it allows the public health officer to require that health plans make a vaccine a covered part of preventive services. Further it allows a public health officer to submit a blanket order for 'a prescription.' I read this to mean that it allows individuals to get the vaccine administered from a pharmacy or clinic without an additional health provider order.

To me the key concept in both sections of this bill is that it allows an individual to get the vaccine as part of their health plan's prevention benefits, and further, allows the individual to get the vaccine without their personal provider's orders. I read this bill as intending to make vaccines available more readily and more easily and nothing more.

There are loud voices in our communities pushing back against public health and health care mandates. This bill does not address these issues. Rather it is a bill that addresses access.

I heartily support increasing access to vaccines. This bill will do that in two important ways. This bill is a service to the people of Oregon.

Thank you and thank you for your service,

Kevin Walsh, MD
Hood River