



County of Malheur

HEALTH DEPARTMENT

February 11, 2026

Re: SB 1598: Vaccine access

Position: Support

Chair Patterson and members of the Senate Health Care Committee:

On behalf of Oregon's 33 county-based public health authorities, I respectfully urge your support for SB 1598.

SB 1598 modernizes statutory references to federal immunization recommendations, allowing Oregon to rely on state-specific guidance grounded in rigorous science and informed by trusted medical expertise. This flexibility is essential to ensuring that immunization policy reflects Oregon's public health needs while maintaining the highest standards of evidence-based practice.

Importantly, SB 1598 preserves insurance coverage for vaccines and protections for vaccine providers. As many pediatricians are unable to access vaccines not available through the Vaccines for Children program, maintaining coverage is critical to ensuring families have multiple pathways to protect their children's health. Other members of the West Coast Health Alliance, including California and Washington, have taken similar action to safeguard vaccine access. SB 1598 is therefore essential to ensuring Oregon families are not left behind.

The urgency of this legislation is underscored by current vaccination rates. During the 2024–25 school year, only 86% of Oregon kindergarteners were fully vaccinated—well below the 95% threshold needed to achieve community immunity. This gap places children and communities at increased risk of preventable disease outbreaks.

The financial consequences of outbreaks are substantial. Nationally, the average cost per measles case is approximately \$43,000, with costs reaching as high as \$243,000 per case. In 2019, the Clark County, Washington measles outbreak resulted in \$2.3 million in public health response costs, \$76,000 in direct medical expenses, and \$1 million in lost productivity—for a total of \$3.4 million.

Without proactive investment in vaccine access, Oregon risks incurring these costs repeatedly across communities statewide. Passing SB 1598 is a critical first step in preventing both avoidable illness and unnecessary public expense. We respectfully urge your support for SB 1598. Thank you for your consideration and for your continued commitment to protecting the health of Oregonians.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Stricker, RN
Executive Director
Malheur County Health Department

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