Submitter: Jessica Gosnell

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Health Care

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1598

My name is Jessica Gosnell, and I support vaccine access.

Dear Senators,

My name is Jessica Gosnell, MD. I am a medical doctor now disabled due to chronic illnesses. My chronic illnesses are the result of several genetic disorders that impair my immune system function. One of these disorders is called Hereditary Angioedema — a disorder of spontaneous and life-threatening angioedema (severe swelling of any soft tissue) that killed 30% of all those affected before current medications were available. Death was most often due to acute laryngeal angioedema and asphyxiation. The rescue medication I take for this is an injection that retails for $36,546.67 per 3, 3ml of 30mg/3ml (3 injections). Typically, I require 6 injections a month. I also take a preventative injection that retails for $26,392.78 for 200mg/2 mL, a single injection. I require 2 of these a month. That is a MONTHLY retail cost of $125,878.90. Above and beyond these medications, I require 12 other Rx medications to manage the immune dysfunction and other complications from my other genetic disorder. I am fortunate that with a very good PPO insurance plan via my husband and manufacturer assistance I only have to pay a copay of $300/month for these 2 hereditary angioedema drugs; however, none of this is guaranteed and any lapse in insurance would make it unobtainable. When I do not have my medication, I get laryngeal swells that last 2-3 days and impair my breathing and swallowing. The most common trigger for these events is infection, usually a respiratory infection. When a swell has not been stopped in its initial stages by my rescue medicine (i.e. taking my rescue injection within the first minutes of the swell), it cannot be reversed by any other medication available. This condition does not respond to antihistamines, epinephrine or steroids. The only life-saving intervention in the case of severe laryngeal swelling is tracheostomy and intubation. Therefore, I must always be within reasonable distance from a hospital equipped to provide this level of emergency care. With the decreased access to vaccines, it is harder to protect myself from infection via vaccination of myself and my family. It also means that overall population vaccination rates drop, and my risk of acquiring an infection when in public spaces goes up dramatically. I mask routinely in public and dramatically limit my time outside of my house, but because my other immune disorders make me particularly susceptible to infections I still spend several weeks each season ill with a virus. I cannot stress enough that even a cold virus could be deadly for me; however, more severe viruses are even more likely to be lethal and these are the ones vaccines are targeting. Above and beyond concerns for my own health is the fact that my children have a 50:50 chance of inheriting this condition and all of its associated risks. I implore you, on behalf of the entire Hereditary Angioedema community, to restore full vaccine access with the fewest possible barriers and the greatest possible factual public education. I know that most people would never dream that a cold virus could kill someone, but for someone like me it could happen in a matter of minutes if I don't have treatment. And there is a MASSIVE cost barrier to treatment, so I am certain that there are lots of people living with this condition without the benefit of treatment. Again, studies have repeatedly shown that without treatment 30% of these people will die. Public vaccine rates determine whether me, my kids, my sister (who also has this), and all other Hereditary Angioedema sufferers can effectively keep our risk level at an acceptable level and engage with the wider world. We are the vulnerable who rely on herd immunity to protect us, and we need your assistance. Thank you.

Please pass Senate Bill 1598.