**Op-Ed**

**Oregon Public Health Association Urges Support for HB 3063, Closing the Non-medical Vaccination Exemption**

Parents care about their children and want to keep them safe. For some parents, this has led to a misunderstanding or disregard of the science that demonstrates that vaccines are safe, prevent disease, and are an important tool that ensures Oregonians are safe and healthy. Science has proven that vaccines are one of the safest ways to protect our children’s health as well as the health of our community and vulnerable people among us who are not able to be vaccinated (for example, infants). Vaccines are the standard of care-millions of people are vaccinated every year without serious consequences, beyond a sore arm or low fever. The benefits far outweigh any risk.

Unvaccinated children suffer needlessly from preventable disease. The Oregon Health Authority reports infants with pertussis (also known as whooping cough) are the most likely to suffer complications and death. Since 2003, 249 (35%) of the 707 infants diagnosed with pertussis in Oregon have been hospitalized and five have died. Recent media reports told the story of a six-year-old Oregon boy who spent weeks in a darkened, silent room recovering from tetanus, also known as lockjaw, another vaccine preventable disease. One in twenty children who get measles, will also get pneumonia, the most common cause of death from measles in young children.

Oregonians value freedom of choice and we all deserve to feel save and healthy in our schools, childcare centers, faith communities and other places where we gather together. CDC Director Robert Redfield stated “Measles is incredibly contagious.  A person who has measles can make other people sick four days before they get a rash.  If an infected person enters a room of ten unvaccinated people nine of them will get measles”. As Oregonians, we have the privilege of making informed healthcare decisions for ourselves and our families. The best way to make these choices is to consult with our healthcare providers and public health experts who have science-based facts about disease prevention.

A 2016 study conducted by Johns Hopkins University and published in Health Affairs1 found that for every dollar invested in vaccination in the world’s 94 lowest-income countries, US$ 16 are expected to be saved in healthcare costs, lost wages and lost productivity due to illness and death. The Gates Foundation supported a study that showed for every dollar spent on vaccine, there is a $44 economic return on investment.

Public health policy is focused on doing the most good for the most people. To achieve this, policy makers should look to the science, where the evidence is undeniable, vaccination saves live, saves money and prevents needless suffering. The Oregon Public Health Association supports HB 3063, which eliminates the non-medical exemption for vaccination of children in Oregon. As public health professionals and parents ourselves, we’ve studied the issues, we talked with experts, and we conclude the public policy that protects the most people, especially the most vulnerable people among us, is to close the non-medical exemption. We urge Oregonians and policy makers to support this bill.

**CDC Telebriefing, April 29, 2019**

<https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2019/t0429-national-update-measles.html>

**Pertussis in Oregon**

<https://www.oregon.gov/OHA/PH/DISEASESCONDITIONS/COMMUNICABLEDISEASE/DISEASESURVEILLANCEDATA/ANNUALREPORTS/Documents/2016/2016-Pertussis.pdf>

**New York Times coverage of Oregon boy with tetanus**

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/09/well/oregon-child-tetanus-vaccine.html?action=click&module=News&pgtype=Homepage>

**CDC data on measles**

<https://www.oregon.gov/OHA/PH/DISEASESCONDITIONS/COMMUNICABLEDISEASE/DISEASESURVEILLANCEDATA/ANNUALREPORTS/Documents/2016/2016-Measles.pdf>

**Cost**

A 2016 study conducted by Johns Hopkins University

Ozawa S, Clark S, Portnoy A, Grewal S, Brenzel L, Walker D.G. Return on investment from childhood immunization in low- and middle-income countries, 2011-20. Health Affairs. 2016 Feb;35(2): 199–207

Gates Foundation, Return on Investment

<https://www.gatesnotes.com/2017-Annual-Letter?WT.mc_id=02_14_2017_02_AL2017_BG-GW_&WT.tsrc=BGGW>