



Sharon Meieran
Multnomah County Commissioner, District 1

To: House Committee On Health Care
From: Sharon Meieran, Multnomah County Commissioner
Date: February 28, 2019
Re: Support for House Bill 3063

Chair Salinas, Vice Chairs Hayden and Nosse, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Sharon Meieran. I'm a Multnomah County Commissioner, a practicing emergency physician, and the mom of two children attending public schools. From all of these perspectives, I could not be more supportive of House Bill 3063.

As a doctor, the most solemn oath I swore was to "first do no harm", and failing to immunize children against serious preventable diseases *is* doing harm. In the ER, I see people who are extremely sick, suffering from vaccine-preventable diseases such as whooping cough. I also see people who are immunocompromised from cancer, organ transplants and other diseases and medications that cause immunosuppression. These individuals often can't be vaccinated, despite the fact that a disease like measles could have serious, even deadly consequences for them.

To be honest, despite my strong convictions on this issue, I was nervous to come testify today. I know that other elected officials who have supported this kind of policy have received hateful emails, calls, and even death threats. I understand how intense this issue is, and how powerful our deeply held beliefs about parenting and children's health are. But the tenor of this debate has gotten unhealthy and dangerous. I'm here today because *especially* now, in a political climate of "alternative facts" and fear-based rhetoric, it is more important than ever to stand by facts and science, especially when lives are at stake.

The fact is: immunization is safe, effective, and the benefits vastly outweigh potential risks. There is a lot that we *don't* know, about environmental exposures, toxins, and health risks. But one thing we do know, that *has* been researched comprehensively, is that vaccinations are safe, they are effective in preventing devastating diseases, and they don't cause autism.

As a doctor, the science, evidence, and the benefits vs. risks of vaccines could not be clearer. As a Commissioner charged with protecting the public's health, immunization is an essential way for us to fulfill this responsibility. And as a parent -- I immunize because I want to give my children the best possible chance to be healthy, and it is my duty to teach them about what it means to share responsibility for keeping our community healthy and safe.

Thank you for your consideration of this important bill today, I strongly encourage you to support House Bill 3063.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon Meieran