

Vaccine stewardship and medical error reduction. HB 2371.
Testimony to committee.

Last year our local newspaper reported an incident that troubled me – the news story said that 20,000 households had one or more people who would need to be revaccinated. I was concerned about the impact on the children -- and adults -- who had received the vaccine. Then I thought about all the time and trouble, for both the families and the health care providers, to re-vaccinate everyone, and of course – since I have some interest in ways and means issues – wondered about the cost of all this, to providers, or to the state. There’s a cost to the families, too – the cost of taking time off work, of transportation, and even the potential risks. After some digging and talking with health care professionals, I decided I wanted to help avoid this happening in the future.

Storing vaccine isn’t like keeping nasal spray or cough syrup on the shelf. With this bill, the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) would adopt rules that require clinics to ensure their staff have access – at no cost - to education about the safe storage and the safe administration of public health’s greatest accomplishment: vaccines. This bill will also require clinics that receive vaccines funded by taxpayer to efficiently account for their care and use of this valuable product.

The Oregon Immunization Program provides over \$35 million worth of vaccines to hundreds of clinics across the state. Using a combination of federal funding sources, including the renowned Vaccines for Children program, the program contributes to front line prevention of serious illness and death.

Private and public health clinics are very busy places. In many clinics, staff lack access to information to make sure the vaccines they provide are potent and effective.

I’d like to share with you some of what I’ve learned --

- In 2009 alone, more than 60,000 Oregonians needed to have their immunizations repeated due to very poor storage of vaccines.
- The medical errors from poorly stored vaccine in 2009 cost private and public providers an estimated \$9.4 million in unrecoverable costs, plus an additional \$500,000 to replace actual vaccine costs.
- Refrigerators for vaccine storage must maintain a very narrow 11 degree range. Exposures too cold or too warm can render the vaccines useless.
- Most clinics utilize staff with little access to quality education about proper vaccine storage. This education isn’t complicated, and doesn’t take a lot of time – just an hour or two - it just needs to be done.
- Learning proper storage and accountability techniques, using the nationally renowned ALERT immunization registry, will free up valuable clinic time.

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- The Oregon Immunization Program will take advantage of *free*, web-based educational programs *that clinic staff can access at any time of day*. Twice each year, two staff members at each clinic will spend up to two hours learning about the best practices of stewardship and reducing medical errors.
- Many clinics have already implemented admirable educational requirements for their staff – this bill will exempt such agencies from the state’s web-based training requirement.
- The state Immunization Program can implement both the accountability and education requirements with existing resources – this is a fiscally sound bill. It will, in fact, save money by preventing future revaccination programs.

Closing:

My interest in this started out as a public health issue, and I’m really pleased to present you with an idea that will also save money and increase efficiency! This bill makes it easy for clinics to get access to engaging education about the proper ways to store, administer and account for vaccines, to ensure the protection of our communities, to continue their good work toward preventing serious disease in people of all ages.