



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

May 7, 2019

Dear Chief Clerk Sekerak,

I wish to submit the following explanation for my vote on House Bill 3063-B.

I initially chose to be a co-chief sponsor of HB 3063 because, like my colleagues, I was alarmed by the measles outbreak along Oregon's northern border in Clark County, Washington. At roughly the same time, I became aware that Oregon's non-medical exemption laws allow opt-outs for school for any and all recommended childhood vaccines, potentially endangering students and others with a medical reason for not being vaccinated themselves. Vaccines are the best tool to combat outbreaks of communicable disease. I supported this bill because it's critical to protect children who are more susceptible to harmful and vaccine-preventable communicable diseases, and it's important to protect them in school environments.

Through the course of hearing testimony on the bill in the House Committee on Health Care and the communications I received from Oregon residents, I carefully weighed the testimony presented and ultimately decided to remain steadfast in my support of the bill. I voted "Yes" on HB 3063-B because I believe that Oregon is on a dangerous trajectory toward reduced herd immunity, and that has the potential to impact everyone. Oregon has the highest rates of unvaccinated kindergarteners in the nation. Vaccination rates appear high when Oregon is examined in aggregate, but there are hot spots across the state where vaccination rates are lower, and as a result, those subpopulations are more vulnerable to experiencing an outbreak.

I believe in choice and informed consent to a medical procedure. I also believe that preserving public health requires a collective responsibility for everyone, especially children in school, to be vaccinated against preventable illnesses. The decision a parent makes in whether they vaccinate their child impacts the entire community – and it especially impacts infants who are too young to be vaccinated, immunocompromised individuals, pregnant women, and the elderly. While Oregon luckily avoided a large measles outbreak this time, it's important that we remain vigilant in maintaining herd immunity to avoid a public health crisis in the future when it comes to measles and other vaccine-preventable infectious diseases.

HB 3063-B is a measured policy that preserves parental choice while also requiring families to contribute to our collective responsibility of preserving public health if they also choose to participate in public and private schools. For these reasons, I voted in favor of HB 3063-B to ensure the greatest health for the greatest number of Oregonians.

Sincerely,

Representative Tiffany Mitchell

