



SENATE MAJORITY OFFICE

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Senate pushes for healthier children with informed choice for vaccines

SB 132A prevents diseases by improving 'herd immunity' for children entering school

SALEM—The Oregon Senate today voted to narrow the non-medical exemption for immunizations. Senate Bill 132A, which passed on a vote of 16-13 with one excused, requires parents who decline immunizations to certify that they have reviewed the risks and benefits of immunizations on their child's health.

“Schools ought to be safe places for our children to learn and play, and too many parents are putting our communities at risk by refusing to immunize their children before they enter kindergarten,” said Senator Elizabeth Steiner Hayward (D-Beaverton), who is a family physician. “Parents need to be well-informed about the scientific and medical consequences of this important decision.”

According to Oregon's Public Health Division, Oregon has the highest non-medical exemption rate for immunizations in the entire country. The Division also notes that some Oregon schools have a non-medical exemption rate as high as 70 percent. In order to protect children from contracting dangerous diseases like measles, for example, a school would need an immunization rate of 94 percent. This concept is described as 'herd immunity' or the collective resistance to a disease by a specific population.

“This bill addresses a growing problem that threatens the long-term health of Oregon's children,” said Senate Majority Leader Diane Rosenbaum (D-Portland). “SB 132A protects Oregon families by preserving their right to make an informed choice in the best interest of their children's health.”

Under current law, all parents must provide documentation to the school certifying that their child has received the necessary vaccinations, unless the parent cites a religious or philosophical reason for an exemption. If SB 132A becomes law, parents seeking an exemption must instead certify that they have received and reviewed information provided by a health care practitioner about the risks and benefits of immunizations.

Before the final Senate vote on SB 132A, Senate Democrats defeated a motion to substitute the bill with a minority report.

Senate Bill 132A now heads to the Oregon House of Representatives for consideration.

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