

**Hello, Chair Weisz and Members of the House Human Services Committee,**

My name is Brenda Stallman, I am the Executive Director of Traill District Health Unit, located in Hillsboro and I am here to speak in opposition to HB 1505.

Never in my 40 years of being a registered nurse, and particularly in the last 30 years as a nurse working in the public health arena, did I ever imagine having to defend the benefits of immunizations that are given to prevent death and disease related to vaccine preventable diseases. And yet, here I am not only as an advocate of vaccines, but also to disagree with this proposal of an assigned legal penalty that would be charged in the case they are required to protect our public.

You have heard endless testimony from the medical profession, public health professionals, & experts on vaccine, but today I want to speak about the importance of vaccines as a mother of 2 adult sons and how vaccines impact us through the life span. My children at birth were vaccinated shortly after birth with a hepatitis b shot to prevent a blood borne disease that may be transmitted by the baby's mother during the birth process. The disease damages the liver and can also be transmitted through close contact with others who are infected.

Six or so weeks later, many of us pack up these precious little ones that are totally dependent on us for their health & safety and drop them off at day care. We all have heard of the day care crisis and lack of spots in licensed facilities in our state and nation. That problem has been on the forefront for all my years of public health service. It has only worsened in time. Imagine sending these babies off to day care, to an

environment that they are no longer protected from diphtheria, pertussis, meningitis, or polio? And how will this make our day care situation more palatable, when disease outbreaks make attendance at daycare impossible, and workers impacted by the same exposures?

Somehow we survive the day care years, and we foolishly believe we will have more money once that expense has been eliminated and our kids go off to school. None of us want to talk about Covid, and this is not about covid vaccine, as it is not a required vaccination. What I do want to stress, is Covid was highly infectious, was dangerous, and because of these characteristics, school officials and those of us in public health worked long and hard every day to determine how to keep sick kids and staff from the population that was not. There was little time for anything else.

That was one disease. Now multiply that by 11; the number of diseases children are currently protected from through required vaccines for school entry. Do any of these sound familiar? Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, hepatitis b, polio, meningococcal disease, hepatitis A, measles, mumps, rubella, and varicella. All of these diseases have serious outcomes, including potential death. When would our educators have time to teach when they are tracking a multitude of life threatening illnesses and who has been in contact with each one. And then monitor the days the student can come back to school, which would require an environment free of any of the before mentioned conditions.

So next our kids enter middle school. No longer are they confined within the borders of our own community, but extracurricular activities now take them outside of our towns to

all corners of the state. What school can promise absence of disease where there is lack of required immunizations against these highly contagious diseases?

In a blink of the eye, off to college they go. There, not only are they exposed to diseases circulating around our state, but additionally, those in other parts of the country and world. Do we really want to join these countries that have reduced or absent vaccination requirements and further jeopardize our children's health?

Daycare is a priority issue currently. Another is building and sustaining our workforce. How do we do either when we take away the promise of a safe work environment; one that is free from vaccine preventable diseases. If a worker is out with a case of pertussis, which is a real possibility currently due to increasing numbers of unvaccinated people, if granted, a full recovery may take up to 3 months. That's just one worker not showing up. Imagine if these workers are health care workers in long term care or hospital settings. There is no wiggle room currently to work with fewer staff, and nor can we take the risk of exposure to residents and patients in these facilities.

Today my 80+ year old mother called me and asked me to give you a quote. Mother Myrna says: "We were so happy and relieved when vaccines were developed and available for measles, mumps, chicken pox, and polio. Do any of you in the room want your child or grandchild to have any of these horrible diseases?"

Please consider my testimony in opposition to HB 1505.

Thank you,

Brenda Stallman