

# New Washington state law limits exemptions for measles vaccine

Similar bill pending in Oregon

By **MOLLY SOLOMON**  
*Oregon Public Broadcasting*

VANCOUVER, Wash. — Washington state parents will no longer be able to claim a personal or philosophical exemption to avoid giving their children the measles, mumps and rubella vaccine.

Gov. Jay Inslee signed the bill to limit such exemptions Friday morning during a visit to Vancouver, the epicenter of a measles outbreak that sickened 71 people earlier this year.

"In Washington state we believe in our doctors. We believe in our nurses. We believe in our educators. We believe in science and we love our children," Inslee said alongside Clark County lawmakers and public officials before signing the bill into law. "And that is why in Washington state, we are against measles."

The outbreak in southwest

Washington forced schools to exclude hundreds of unvaccinated students, cost public health authorities nearly \$1 million and prompted Inslee to declare a public health emergency.

The health scare also pushed state legislators to tighten vaccine laws this session. More than 90% of the 71 cases in Washington were people who had not been vaccinated. The local outbreak was officially declared over on April 29, after no new cases were seen after a six-week period.

Inslee said removing the personal, philosophical exemption is an important first step toward public health to protect the state's "most vulnerable citizens." But he urged continued work at local and national levels to dispel fears of vaccines that have circulated on the internet.

"We should be listening to science and medicine, not social media," Inslee said.

State Rep. Paul Harris, R-Vancouver, sponsored the

bill as a simple message to parents: If you want your kids to go to a public school, they must be vaccinated.

"I just think it's the right thing to do," Harris said. "Hopefully this will get our rates up so we have community immunity."

At the time of the recent measles outbreak, Clark County had a vaccination rate of 78%, with some schools in the area reporting rates under 40%. Health officials say communities need to have vaccination rates between 90% and 95% to prevent an outbreak.

"I hope this new law will bring to the forefront again the importance of being vaccinated," Harris said.

As the bill made its way through the Legislature, it drew the attention of anti-vaccine opponents, who flooded public hearings with concerns that vaccines would harm their children. A couple of dozen people stood outside Vancouver City Hall on Friday, holding signs to protest the bill signing.

The new law only applies to the MMR vaccine for measles, mumps and rubella. Parents can continue to opt their kids out of other required school vaccinations with a personal or philosophical exemption. Religious and medical exemptions are also still allowed for all vaccinations.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, measles have sickened at least 764 people in the U.S. this year — an all-time high in cases reported since measles was declared eliminated in 2000.

More than 10 other states are considering tightening their vaccination laws this year, including Oregon, which is debating a bill to do away with nonmedical exemptions entirely.

Clark County public health director Alan Melnick is hopeful Washington can continue to move forward on enforcing stricter laws for child school-required vaccinations and improving public awareness of the issue.

## FREAK SHOW COMES TO TOWN



Photos by Colin Murphey/The Astorian

**ABOVE: A performer known as Johnny Mayhem carves an apple with a chainsaw during the Astoria Freak Show. BELOW: An entertainer on stilts towers over people as they prepare to enter the Astoria Freak Show. See more photos and a video online at [DailyAstorian.com](http://DailyAstorian.com)**



# Undocumented immigrants could get driver's licenses under bill

Hope is to make roads safer

By **CLAIRE WITHCUMBE**  
*Oregon Capital Bureau*

SALEM — Undocumented immigrants and others who can't prove they are in the country legally could get a driver's license under a proposal in the state House.

With less than two months before the Legislature adjourns, though, there has been no action since lawmakers on the Joint Committee on Transportation took testimony on the bill in mid-April. The committee is scheduled to work on the bill in about two weeks.

Supporters say the bill, by allowing drivers who are undocumented to get licensed and to get car insurance, could make roads safer, potentially reducing the number of hit-and-runs by uninsured drivers.

They say that if the bill is passed, undocumented immigrants would no longer need to rely on their teenage children or other people with legal status to get to work or other obligations — especially in the state's rural areas, where driving long distances is par for the course.

The bill would direct the state Department of Transportation to start offering licenses to people without proof of legal status starting in 2021.

### Thirty-six sponsors

The bill has 36 sponsors in the House — more than half of all its members.

One of the bill's chief sponsors, state Rep. Diego Hernandez, D-Portland, said that's far from a guarantee

that House Bill 2015 will pass.

Hernandez hopes the bill will wind its way from committee, to the budget committee, and to each chamber.

"But we're running out of time," Hernandez said. "So anything can happen."

Sen. James Manning, D-Eugene, another chief sponsor of the measure, said he believes a majority of his Senate colleagues support clearing a path to driver's licenses.

"I think that the majority of my colleagues would support a safety bill like this," Manning said. "Everyone has their own bills that they're trying to move forward, so it's a bit of a little shuffle ... But I intend to carry this message through and have one-on-ones with people that have any questions about the bill."

Manning served in the Army for 24 years, a tenure that included stints abroad.

During an interview, he held up the driver's license he obtained while serving in Panama.

"The only thing that this entitled me to or provided for me, was that I understood the rules of the road and I was able to get insurance," Manning said. "Nothing more, nothing less."

Manning stresses that the bill is "about safety."

All people living in the U.S. have to pass tests and get cleared to drive, he said.

"We want to make sure that if you're here temporarily or long term and you're going to navigate our roads, we want to make sure that you're properly licensed," Manning said. "And again, getting a driver's license is a privilege, it's not a right. Because you're an American citizen, that doesn't mean

you have the right to drive. You have to prove that you qualify to drive."

Causa, an immigrants' rights organization, estimates that up to 100,000 people living in Oregon could be eligible.

The measure wouldn't impact only undocumented immigrants.

Even U.S. citizens who, for whatever reason, may not have access to documents proving their legal presence would be able to get driving privileges by passing the required tests.

That includes people who are homeless and survivors of domestic violence.

Abusive partners can hold vital records hostage or destroy them, according to Jessica Mathis, a housing coordinator for Bradley Angle, a Portland shelter.

"When survivors are unable to drive, they can't maintain the jobs they need in order to support their families and leave abuse," Mathis said in written testimony. "Without the ability to go to work, access social services, or take their children to school they often have to return to their abuser. Having to choose between safety and driving illegally is not only bad for these families, but the community. We are all impacted by the increased safety and financial risk of unlicensed and uninsured drivers."

### Political climate

In late 2007, then-Gov. Ted Kulongoski, a Democrat, issued an executive order saying that people applying for driver's licenses, driving permits and ID cards in Oregon had to document their citizenship or that they were in the U.S. legally.

Six years later, lawmakers

moved to create a special driver's card program for undocumented immigrants, but opponents sent the measure to the ballot, where voters rejected it.

Supporters of the new bill believe the political environment around immigration has changed in the wake of the 2016 presidential election.

They point to the failure of Measure 105, a ballot measure last November that would have repealed Oregon's decades-old law that prevents state and local law enforcement for expending resources to arrest people whose only violation of the law is being here without

legal permission.

"In the past several years, the context around immigration has changed completely around the country and around our state," said Iván Hernández, communications manager for Causa. "We saw that with Measure 105 ... when Oregonians voted overwhelmingly to protect our immigrant neighbors by protecting the state's anti-discrimination and anti-racial profiling laws

and the state sanctuary law."

Others, however, have objected to the idea.

Keith Rosenstrater, of Salem, urged lawmakers to reject the measure because it "legitimizes illegal immigration, devalues citizenship and threatens the sovereignty of our state and nation."

*The Oregon Capital Bureau is a collaboration between EO Media Group, Pamplin Media Group and Salem Reporter.*

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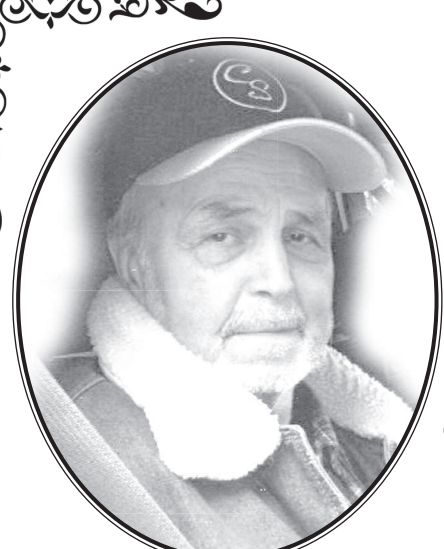
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