



Testimony heard over vaccination exemptions for children

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SALEM, Ore. – Lawmakers listened to public testimony Tuesday on a change to the way people get vaccination exemptions for their children.

[Senate Bill 132](#) would make a couple of changes: one, it would take out the word "religion" as a basis for opting out of getting shots. It will simply describe it as any personal belief system.

There was some testimony on the need to clarify that.

The bill will also require parents to get more education on the immunization process.

If parents want an exemption, they'll have to watch an online instructional video or provide signed documentation from their health-care provider to show they've gone over the reasons why the state requires kids to get shots.

Supporters of the bill say it'll help control epidemics like Washington's recent bout with whooping cough.

But some scientists can see why parents may be reluctant to get the vaccinations.

"It's really an interesting situation that we have because it's one of the few situations where vaccine manufacturers collaborate with the government in order to deliver a product to all children. And it's easy to see why parents come up with conspiracy theories," said Dr. Heather Zwickey, a professor of immunology at the National College of Natural Medicine.

There was some testimony about Oregon's vaccination rate. A Lane County health official stated that Oregon's kindergarten vaccination rate is the lowest in the country. And across the country, the lack of available health care has never been one of the top reasons people don't get vaccinations.

Committee members did mention there's likely to be some amendment to the bill before it gets a vote.

If it passes, it will go into effect March of next year.