



Harney County



Public Health  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Governor Kate Brown

Office of the Governor

900 Court Street, Suite 254

Salem, OR 97301-4047

**Dear Governor Brown,**

I am writing to you, with partner support, on behalf of my healthcare employees in rural Oregon to express my concern about the new COVID-19 vaccination requirements for healthcare workers throughout the state. I believe, while potentially an effective way to boost vaccine rates, the consequences of this new measure on our local healthcare systems will cause severe strain on our resources and workforce. My partners and I ask that you please consider an exception for smaller counties, below 50,000 population. This would ensure that our fragile healthcare systems do not suffer from worker shortage due to the requirement that all healthcare workers be vaccinated or terminated, with the exception for medical or religious reasons.

As a director of a county health department, I understand and agree with the immense importance of the COVID-19 vaccine. Throughout the past eight months, myself, along with thousands of healthcare workers throughout the state, have worked tirelessly to educate our public on the safety of the three approved COVID-19 vaccines. We have made so much progress, and our efforts have helped achieve over 70% vaccination rate in the 18+ population throughout the state. However, as you are aware, there are many employees in our healthcare system who still are hesitant to become vaccinated. While we may beg them to change their minds, if this rule goes into place as it stands, we will lose many necessary workers. I am writing this letter not because I object to the vaccine, but because I object to the systematic desecration of our local medical systems.

Critical access to care in rural communities is threatened and we need help maintaining it. Even with the two exceptions, there are countless healthcare workers I have spoken with who will not vaccinate because they do not trust the vaccine, rather than for religious or medical reasons. These individuals will be forced to quit or be terminated, and even without the current spike in cases due to the Delta Variant, are irreplaceable. We live in areas where recruiting qualified, licensed healthcare workers is very difficult even without a raging pandemic. We simply do not have the manpower or time to terminate vital healthcare workers and train replacements when we are combating the rise in cases. Even a 10% termination rate in most healthcare systems would devastate rural Oregon. It is very hard to recruit healthcare workers, due to the stresses of COVID-19 or financial restrictions. I ask that you please consider the challenging circumstances faced by many throughout the state. My partners and I are open to dialogue on this issue and hope that our dire predicament will not go unnoticed.

Nicholas Calvin, J.D. MPH.

Harney County Health Department

Kimberly Lindsay

Grant County Health Department

Supporters: Rep. Mark Owens, Jim Hamsher (Grant County Commissioner), Pete Runnels (Harney County Judge), Sarah Laiosa, D.O. (Harney/Malheur County Health Officer), Patty Dorroh (Harney County Commissioner), Kristen Shelman (Harney County Commissioner), Hannah Frank, P.A. (Harney County PCP) Barbara Rothgeb, FNP. (Harney County Communicable Disease Nurse), Kelly Singhose (High County Health and Wellness Manager), Jolene Cawlfild, FNP. (Former Harney County Director)