FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Statement from the Oregon Academy of Family Physicians, Oregon Pediatric Society, and the Oregon Chapter, American College of Physicians

Primary care physicians are united against non-medical vaccine exemptions

As leaders of our respective physician membership organizations, we were dismayed to hear Oregon gubernatorial candidate Dr. Knute Buehler endorsing non-medical vaccine exemptions, including for “alternative medical beliefs” during the October 9 televised debate. By supporting non-medical vaccine exemptions, he is putting Oregon children and vulnerable adults at risk.

Our organizations represent the physicians who provide primary care for adults and children in Oregon, and we reject vaccine exemptions without a medical reason. Non-medical exemptions from vaccine recommendations lower vaccination rates and allow the spread of diseases such as influenza, measles, mumps, whooping cough, and hepatitis in Oregon.

Current Oregon law fails to meet national guidelines and protect all children and vulnerable adults. Because we allow non-medical exemptions from vaccine requirements, vaccination rates in Oregon are some of the lowest in the United States. This puts the lives of vulnerable Oregonians at risk. Our members offer advice, support and information to help those who are uncertain to safely vaccinate their children and themselves, and thus protect their loved ones and the entire community.

“We support evidence-based policy regarding vaccination schedules because they have proven to be safe, effective, and life-saving,” said Robyn Liu, MD, MPH, OAFP President. “State laws and policies that strictly limit vaccine exemptions are an essential public health intervention, because they support levels of immunity that are likely to protect the most vulnerable from serious illness. Even one life lost due to vaccine-preventable disease is one too many.”

“Studies show that 95% of the community needs to be vaccinated in order to achieve community immunity,” said Carla McKelvey, MD, OPS President. “We urge Dr. Buehler to reconsider his position so that it is evidence-based and aligns with the medical and public health experts who develop vaccine-related recommendations and legislation.”

“ACP stands with our primary care colleagues in emphasizing the life-saving importance of vaccinations.” said Adam Obley, MD, chair of the Oregon ACP public policy committee and Marianne Parshley, MD, Governor of the Oregon Chapter of ACP. “This is not just important because of the demonstrable public health benefit of curtailing vaccine-preventable diseases, it is also vital to protect
the most seriously ill adults who often are unable to receive vaccines themselves because of their medical conditions and treatments.”

As the doctors on the front lines caring for Oregonians every day, and particularly during flu season, we call on Dr. Buehler to join the American Academy of Family Physicians, the American College of Physicians, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the American Medical Association in opposing non-medical exemptions from vaccination requirements.

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The Oregon Academy of Family Physicians is a membership organization for more than 1600 physicians, residents, and medical students across the state who provide primary care for Oregonians of all ages.

The Oregon Chapter of American College of Physicians' more than 1700 members are internal medicine physicians, residents, and medical students who provide primary care, as well as hospital based and subspecialty care for adults across Oregon.

The Oregon Pediatric Society (OPS), the state chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, is dedicated to improving the health of all children in Oregon, regardless of income, race and ethnicity, gender, and immigration status.