



**Testimony in Support of LD 51, An Act to Restore Religious and Philosophical Exemptions to Immunization Requirements, LD 1098, An Act to Restore Religious and Philosophical Exemptions Regarding Immunization Requirements, and LD 1209, An Act to Reinstate the Religious and Philosophical Vaccine Exemptions for Private Schools and Virtual Public Charter Schools**

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and the distinguished members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, my name is Nick Murray and I serve as director of policy for Maine Policy Institute. We are a free market think tank, a nonpartisan, non-profit organization that advocates for individual liberty and economic freedom in Maine. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on LD 51, LD 1098, and LD 1209.

Many young families in Maine were placed under undue financial and emotional hardship after this law was changed to remove religious and philosophical exemptions to the state immunization schedule in 2020. It unfairly singled out a class of parents who simply exercised their right of conscience to raise their children the way they prefer. Is Maine a state that tells parents, “our way or the highway?”

These bills are necessary to right a wrong and restore proper respect to the individual rights of Maine people—to their bodily autonomy. They would allow religious and philosophical exemptions to state immunization mandates for children to attend school, or for adults to work in a healthcare facility or a nursery school.

Simply stated, the public health rationale for mandatory vaccination does not meet the high standard to violate liberty promised to every individual by the United States and Maine Constitutions.

The state has no business dictating the choices of parents, whether in education, health, or any other arena. Government exists to protect individual rights, not to run individuals’ lives or immune systems.

Please deem LD 51, LD 1098, and LD 1209 “Ought To Pass” and restore respect for bodily autonomy in Maine law. Thank you for your time and consideration.