

John Lewis  
Cape Elizabeth  
LD 51

Dear Respective Members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee,

I am writing to submit public testimony in support of LD 51: An Act to Restore Religious and Philosophical Exemptions to Immunization Requirements. Forcing employees or students to have to choose between their job or education and their religion is coercion, and is the antithesis of the Free Exercise Clause under the First Amendment.

In fact, the state violated any public interest argument by allowing COVID-positive employees to treat patients - the very people the mandate was "supposed to protect". According to an article from WMTW, in January of 2022 St. Mary's Hospital in Lewiston permitted COVID-positive employees to return to work because of the severe workforce shortage exacerbated by the law.

It is without a doubt the COVID vaccines are not without risk. When risk is present, the decision should be left to the individual, or in the case of minors left up to the parents. Weighing the risks/benefits of medical intervention with one's religious or philosophical views is the epitome of informed consent. Not only is informed consent ethical, it is a legal obligation.

It is for these reasons I am urging a vote of Ought to Pass.

Thank you,

John Lewis  
Cape Elizabeth, ME