

April 2, 2023

Dear Honorable Members of the Joint Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs,

My name is Elizabeth Mann, and I live with my family in Portland. I am writing today to voice my **STRONG OPPOSITION** to LD 51 and its sister bills (specifically LD 1098, LD 1209, LD 1228, LD 1448, LD 869). It is incredibly disappointing that, despite the significant gains that have been made in vaccine coverage in the short time since Public Law 154 passed in 2020, legislators who do not speak for the majority of Mainers continue to seek ways to threaten children's health, their right to safe education, and ultimately, public health. I am a parent, a public health nurse, and a voter who supported Maine's vaccine law in March 2020 amid the referendum effort, as did an overwhelming majority (72.5%) of my fellow Mainers. I supported then – and I fervently support now – public health, child safety, and fair access to education, and this new round of tone-deaf and irresponsible legislation threatens to undermine public health and the right to a safe learning environment for Maine's children.

The science is clear & indisputable: immunizations are overwhelmingly safe and effective, and prevent deadly disease and the disruption that outbreaks bring to our schools and communities. Herd immunity – achieved only through high vaccination rates – is the best prevention strategy to minimize morbidity and mortality related to vaccine-preventable infectious disease. Passage of any one of these pieces of legislation would undermine Maine's popular vaccine law and have disastrous consequences for children and families, especially those who are immunocompromised and most vulnerable to infection. With anti-vaccine legislative efforts like those being proposed, I have to wonder if our elected officials and policymakers have learned anything from the tragedies of the COVID-19 pandemic.

I was incredibly proud of our legislature when the vaccine law was passed – and even prouder when my fellow Mainers made their voices heard at the polls in March 2020 to ensure the law was upheld. In doing so, Maine set the standard for public health and safety, and served as a role model for other states to pursue the same common-sense vaccine legislation. Please do not allow a vocal minority to undo what Maine has identified as the best solution to a very serious problem: dangerously high rates of unvaccinated children and outbreaks of infectious disease. Please do not allow these pieces of legislation to advance any further in the Maine legislature by voting **"ought not to pass"**. Mainers overwhelmingly support strong school vaccine laws, and have shown that we will not compromise when it comes to our children's health and safety. Please show us that you won't compromise, either.

Many thanks for your time & consideration,

Elizabeth Mann RN MSN PHNA

Mother, public health nurse, Portland resident