

TESTIMONY OF CLAIRE MORTIMER, FNP, MSN

Public Hearing before the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

Regarding LD 51 / HP 26

An Act to Restore Religious and Philosophical Exemptions to Immunization Requirements

April 3, 2023 Augusta, Maine

Esteemed Members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs:

My name is Claire Mortimer. I am a board certified Family Nurse Practitioner, and I have 45 years experience in health care. I have served on the faculties of University of California and the Maine-Dartmouth Family Practice Residency Training Program. I have worked in Central Maine and Hancock County, in addition to three other states and abroad. I currently have a private practice in Blue Hill. I am a mother and a grandmother.

I strongly support LD 51, which would restore exemptions that had been in place for a long time on the grounds of sincerely held religious or philosophical belief.

All medical decisions involve a detailed assessment of the potential risks and benefits of any particular procedure or medication. Vaccines are injectable pharmaceutical products, with potential benefits and risks, including harm or death.

In our country it is a human right to exercise voluntary informed consent to choose to take a risk on any medical procedure or treatment, including taking risks with pharmaceutical products such as vaccines.

People are not all the same and we do not all respond the same way to drugs or vaccines, just like we do not all respond the same way to infectious diseases. During the past three decades the Institute of Medicine has published a series of reports pointing out the large gaps in vaccine safety science and has confirmed that some people are genetically, biologically and environmentally more susceptible to suffering brain inflammation and other types of serious vaccine reactions, but doctors often do not know who will be injured or die from vaccination.

Pharmaceutical companies who manufacture medications can be sued if their medication causes severe harm or death due to negligence. Unfortunately, since 1986 if a vaccine causes an injury or death, the company that made the vaccine is protected from liability. Parents of children who have been harmed or died due to vaccine injury may not legally hold the manufacturer of the vaccine that caused their child's death accountable in a court of law.

The federal government has paid out billions dollars to victims of vaccine injury since Congress passed the National Childhood Vaccine Injury Act of 1986. Those billions of dollars paid out are

paid with our tax dollars. The companies that make the vaccines do not pay. Therefore there is no incentive for these companies to change the ingredients in their vaccines or make changes that would make the vaccines safer.

The vaccine industry in the United States was \$36.45 billion in 2018, and is now hundreds of billions. This is a very powerful industry with lots of resources to lobby and influence policy to remove parental rights to be able to delay or decline a vaccine. The industry benefits from forced use. What we have in Maine since 2020 is forced, mandated vaccination of children in order to participate in school, such an important experience for all children.

I know several families that have pulled their children out of school rather than be forced to inject pharmaceutical products into their children. I also know several professionals, doctors and dentists in particular, who closed their practices and moved their families away from Maine because the exemptions we had in place were removed. Our communities suffer today because those professionals left.

If a child receives all of the recommended vaccinations, they will have been injected with 209 different chemicals. Some vaccines do still contain mercury, especially the shots that combine multiple vaccines in one injection. There is still a lot of aluminum in vaccines. Aluminum and mercury are harmful to human health, and particularly harmful to small children.

A recent study in England found that 100% of brain tissue samples from individuals diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder contained extremely high amounts of aluminum. This is a very significant scientific finding that should make us all question why vaccine producers are still putting aluminum in vaccines.

Children and adults can be fully vaccinated and still get infected with and transmit infectious diseases, such as pertussis, sometimes without even knowing it. Most so-called "outbreaks" have occurred in vaccinated individuals.

While vaccines may contribute toward enhancing immunity against contracting specific diseases, they may also be responsible for causing autoimmune disorders and other long-term adverse affects. For example, a vaccine might decrease the likelihood of contracting a contagious illness, while increasing the odds of developing a neurological disorder, immunological injury, or heart disease later in life. In addition, allergies, seizures, diabetes and thrombocytopenia are more likely in vaccinated populations. Vaccinated children may have an increased risk of cancer.

The fact is that there was no crisis for any vaccine-preventable disease in Maine when the exemptions were in place.

In some individuals the risks associated with the vaccine are greater than the risk of having the disease. Many of these diseases are mild and easy to recover from, and result in better immunity than the immunity bestowed by a vaccine.

Parents have a fundamental right to make fully informed decisions regarding the health care of their children. We all have a right to decide what chemicals we will allow into our bodies, and which ones we refuse to allow into our bodies.

A child who is injured or killed by a vaccine is just as important as a child who gets sick from a childhood illness.

Whenever there is risk, there must be a choice to say no.

I am not against vaccines. Do not insult me by calling me an anti-vaxxer. I am in favor of safe vaccines that are effective at preventing serious illness. I am in favor of full disclosure of all risks. I am in favor of freedom to refuse an unsafe vaccine after full disclosure of all risks and benefits.

Forced vaccination and coercion do not belong in our society.

I strongly urge you to vote YES on LD 51. Please restore our freedoms and our exemptions.