



April 3, 2023 ANA-Maine P.O. Box 647 Kennebunk, ME 04043 [www.anamaine.org](http://www.anamaine.org)

To: Maine Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

- Senator Joseph Rafferty
- Senator James Libby
- Senator Teresa Pierce
- Rep. Michael Brennan
- Rep. Barbara Bagshaw
- Rep. Jan Dodge
- Rep. Sheila Lyman
- Rep. Rebecca Millett
- Rep. Kelly Murphy
- Rep. Edward Polewarczyk
- Rep. Heidi Sampson
- Rep. Holly Sargent
- Rep. J. Worth

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**Testimony in opposition to LD No. 51:** An Act to restore religious and philosophical exemptions to immunization requirements.

The American Nurses Association of Maine (ANA-Maine) is an affiliate of the American Nurses Association and represents all registered nurses. Our membership is 602 nurses that practice in all health care settings throughout Maine.

In opposition to LD 51, I am enclosing the strong position statement from the American Nurses Association and supported by ANA-Maine. In particular, please note, “ANA does not support any exemptions from immunization other than for medical contraindications. ANA does not endorse religious or philosophical exemptions” The purpose of this position is rooted in decades of public health data where vaccines to prevent communicable diseases are proven effective.

**Immunizations: ANA Position Statement:** Historically, the American Nurses Association (ANA) has strongly supported immunizations to protect the public from highly communicable and deadly diseases such as measles, mumps, diphtheria, pertussis, and influenza (ANA, 2019; ANA, 2015; ANA, 2006), and has supported mandatory vaccination policies for registered nurses and health care workers under certain circumstances. Considering several recent and significant measles outbreaks in the United States, as well as the global pandemic of COVID-19, ANA has reviewed our current position statement for clarity and intent and examined present best practices and recommendations from the broader health care community.

**Statement of ANA position:** Effective protection of the public health mandates that all individuals receive immunizations against vaccine-preventable diseases according to the best and most current evidence outlined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP). All health care personnel (HCP), including registered nurses (RNs), should be vaccinated according to current recommendations for immunization of HCP by the CDC and Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology (APIC). ANA also believes that it is imperative for everyone to receive immunizations for vaccine-preventable diseases as vaccines are critical to infectious disease prevention and control. Moreover, nurses have a professional and ethical obligation to model the same health care standards they recommend to their patients.

ANA does not support any exemptions from immunization other than for medical contraindications. All requests for medical exemption from vaccination should be accompanied by documentation from the appropriate authority to support the request.

Recertification of the medical exemption is an annual obligation. Individuals exempted from vaccination may be required to adopt measures or practices in the workplace to reduce the chance of disease transmission. Employers should offer reasonable accommodations in such circumstances. ANA does not endorse philosophical or religious exemptions.

ANA-Maine strongly recommends that all registered nurses, health care workers and the public be vaccinated against COVID-19. There is significant clinical evidence on the safety and effectiveness of the three approved COVID-19 vaccines (Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna, and Johnson & Johnson/Janssen) being administered under the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) Emergency Use Authorization process. With regard to these three vaccines, ANA does not support any exemptions other than for medical contraindications to being vaccinated against COVID-19.

As novel diseases emerge, such as COVID-19, ANA supports ongoing research and development of safe, easily accessed vaccinations for these public health threats.

Vaccinations must be available and accessible to all to ensure public health and safety.