

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and distinguished members of the committee, I am asking you today to vote ought to pass on LD 51.

My name is Tanya Blanchard and I live in Thorndike, Maine. My husband and I were not born in Maine, but we are Mainers by choice. We first moved here in 1999 because we wanted to raise our children in a state that recognized personal freedoms. Even when a job transfer briefly moved us out of state, we chose to come back in 2008 and have made Maine our home. There have been times that the state of Maine has passed laws that we felt were restricting our personal freedoms, but none like the law that removed our religious and philosophical rights to immunization exemptions, LD798.

My husband and I are devout Christians. Our faith and religious practice are fundamental to the very foundation of our lives. We believe that scripture is the Divine Word of God, and that we are responsible for studying his word (2 Timothy 3:16-17). We also believe that it is the personal responsibility of each believer to ensure that their faith is anchored in the Word of God, prayer, and seeking guidance from the Holy Spirit (Romans 8). This responsibility exists apart from any organized church or leader thereof. These are the tenants by which we have lived our adult lives, and by which we raise our children.

We believe that God determines our mortality, and we honor God by keeping our minds and bodies healthy benefiting from those natural things which He has provided for us on this earth, such as fresh air water, food, and nutrients. We honor God and His creation and the blessings He has bestowed upon us, and we receive with thanksgiving those things created by God (1 Timothy 4:4). We believe that introducing materials into our bodies such as man-made vaccines demonstrates a lack of faith in and a violation of God's will and suggests that God has not sufficiently provided for us.

Scripture tells us that we are created by God, in His image, and that our bodies are a temple for the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 3:16-17) In 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 the Apostle Paul speaks of the importance of our bodies, "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. Therefore, glorify God in your body." Romans 12:1 tells us to present our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God. With all this in mind, we endeavor to protect our bodies from that which is considered biblically unclean.

While the Word of God also instructs us to obey the law of the government placed over us, when the law of man conflicts with the Word of God, we must obey God. The removal of our religious and philosophical exemptions regarding vaccinations has forced our family to make difficult choices regarding where we work, how we educate our children, what their future careers can be, and where they might choose to live when they become adults. While we have not yet taken the steps to move out of Maine, the limitations placed on our family are steering us to move to a more faith-friendly state.

We'd like to continue to make Maine our home, and to see our children stay in Maine to work and raise their own families. Therefore, I ask you to please recommend LD51 as Ought to Pass to restore our religious freedom in the state of Maine.

