Dear Respective Members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee,

I am giving written testimony in favor of the proposed legislation, LD 51, An Act to Restore Religious and Philosophical Exemptions to Immunization Requirements.

My husband is a recently retired Army combat veteran who served twenty-two years under oath to uphold our nation's sacred constitution.

During my husband's service, our family and especially our two sons sacrificed birthdays, holidays, and having the stability of a permanent home moving cross country over eleven times in 17 years to support our great nation.

Upon my husband's retirement, we were finally going to be able to return to Maine; a familiar place that my husband and I were both raised; our home. We planned to raise our sons here, provide a home that they would be able to keep friendships, graduate high school, go on to college, and hopefully remain in the beautiful state of Maine.

Imagine our devastation when returning to our beloved home state to find our sons unable to attend public schools due to our faith.

Just a little over three months ago, our family made the hard decision to leave our beloved state to offer our boys educational opportunities that our home state has denied them. Our deciding factor being the illegitimate passing of a law that discriminated against our children due to practicing our sincerely held beliefs.

Myself and my family stand firm in that the First Amendment and our right to religion is unalienable. It is nonnegotiable.

LD798 crossed the line of church and state and created a law that is a direct violation of civil rights of a protected class by denying access to public education due to religious tenants.

Restoring religious and philosophical freedoms to Maine upholds the sacrality of our foundational rights. Our hope is to one day return with our family, when we are once again free from discrimination.

Pass LD51, LD869, LD1098, LD1148, LD1209, LD1228 and give the freedom of religion and education back to Maine's children.

Emilee Brown