



**Testimony in Opposition to
LD 51, An Act to Restore Religious and Philosophical Exemptions
to Immunization Requirements**

**Kevin Lewis, CEO
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Community Health Options is Maine's only nonprofit CO-OP health insurance company. We exist for the benefit of our members and our mission which is to provide affordable, high quality benefits that promote health and wellbeing. Because vaccines are essential to public health, we are opposed to broad exemptions that will undermine what should be our first line of defense: a high vaccination rate that ultimately protects everyone, young and old alike.

There are medical reasons why some people are not able to receive a vaccine. Public Law 2019, Chapter 154 maintained the exemption for individuals for whom immunization is medically inadvisable. There is a clear consensus in the medical community concerning the importance of immunization. We believe Maine state law should reflect immunization recommendations from our national Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. We encourage this Committee to join us in supporting the health and wellbeing of all Mainers by opposing LD 51.

The COVID-19 pandemic serves as a stark reminder of the danger posed by viruses. The intensity and duration of the public health emergency over the past three years is nearly unprecedented in living memory in part because of widespread use of vaccines for polio, measles, rubella, diphtheria, and other viruses. Rolling back protections to public health is not in the best interest of Mainers.