

April 3, 2023

To the members of the committee of education and cultural affairs, I thank you all for your time and service to the citizens of Maine. I'm going to share with you how LD 798 has affected myself and my family.

After the passing of my critically ill child in 2018, I was inspired by the many nurses who cared my son and I during our hospitalizations, to return to school to pursue a career in nursing. It was my goal to get pediatric nursing experience in the hospital setting and then bring pediatric home and hospice nursing to Aroostook County. There are chronically ill children throughout the state and their families are in desperate need of reprieve. There is no such nursing in Aroostook County and there is a definite need.

Upon graduation in 2021 I was employed by Northern Light Health in their Neonatal Intensive Care Unit. I was employed for five months when the mandate took effect. I was denied a religious/philosophical exemption to the Covid mRNA therapy and denied medical exemption by healthcare professionals for fear of losing their licenses. I have a blood clotting disorder and I had seen and read of many cases of blood clotting post COVID shots. I could not fathom that I was not granted an exemption under these circumstances.

Two months later I finally found a provider that was not scared of the threats, and agreed that, with my medical history, I qualified for a medical exemption. By this point I was no longer able to get an interview at any local healthcare facility, because "it doesn't matter, you can't show up to work without the COVID vaccine." I ask you, when did discrimination become protected?

Let me explain to you the rights of medication administration (vaccines are medications) that are drilled into our heads as nursing students: the *right* patient, the *right* drug, the *right* time, the *right* dose, the *right* route, and MOST importantly the ***right to REFUSE***. When these novel mRNA therapies rolled out, that last right seemed to disappear and was replaced with gaslighting and termination of employment across the board. When we remove choice, we remove ***freedom***.

I ask you why did we replace critical thinking with gaslighting? Why did we replace medical freedom with force? Force only pushed the hesitant further away. The enactment of LD 798 has destroyed the careers/livelihood of countless medical professionals in Maine; those that are in healthcare for the right reasons, to care for the sick with compassion and empathy. It has created hardships on families, mine included, in an already fragile time.

I ask of you to please vote "out to pass" on LD 51 and restore religious and philosophical exemptions and **restore medical choice** as is fought for with other politicized healthcare decisions. In doing so you will also restore families, such as mine, that have been placed in hardship do to LD 798s enactment. I ask you to restore medical freedom to its fullest.

I look forward to the day that I will again be able to honor my son's life by helping others that have been faced with similar hurdles. To help families not feel alone, to guide families through the most trying time of their life, to help families cope, to give families a voice.

Thank you for your time.

Michelle Cyr - Houlton, Maine