

April 23, 2023

**Testimony in Support of LD 172**

**An Act to Allow Health Care Workers to Return to Work by Reinstating Exemptions from Immunization Requirements**

**and**

**LD 601**

**An Act to Reduce the Shortage of Municipal Emergency Medical Services Personnel by Removing Certain Vaccination Requirements**

**and**

**LD 1547**

**An Act to Temporarily Prohibit the State from Mandating COVID-19 Vaccinations**

**and**

**LD 1598**

**An Act to Allow an Exception to Immunization Requirements for Health Care Workers for Vaccines Approved Under Emergency Use Authorization**

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services:

My name is Nathan Gould, and I am writing this testimony in support of LD 172, LD 601, LD 1547, and LD 1598.

From both the variety of bills protecting the individual's right to choose what vaccines they take and the overwhelming showing of support for those bills heard at the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs' lengthy public hearing held on April 3, 2023, it is clear that this is an important issue to many Mainers of disparate backgrounds from all across our State.

One of the great travesties of our government's handling of the pandemic response was the absolute gutting of our healthcare industry. I have no doubt the distinguished members of the Committee will hear numerous accounts of medical personnel who, after risking their own health to aid COVID patients, were thanked by being kicked to the curb for choosing their personal health and convictions over being coerced into receiving an untested gene therapy to maintain their careers. This has caused a shortage in hospital staff, and vaccinated yet COVID-positive medical personnel were asked to return to work.

Frankly, this is an embarrassing display of shortsightedness from our government. Now hospital workers are overworked, beds that could be serving patients lie empty due to lack of staff, and perfectly capable nurses and doctors are unable to use their skills to help the People of Maine, their neighbors. We desperately need these nurses, EMTs, and other trained individuals to shore up our already unstable healthcare system. And we need to protect medical personnel from future infringements on their freedom.

Government is meant to secure our inalienable rights. COVID tested this principle, and it is disheartening, appalling, and disappointing how quickly and easily the State government devolved into authoritarianism in the midst of a crisis, when it is the most important time to protect our personal liberties. This grievous wrong can be rectified and we can heal from the past three years, but this requires Legislators courageous and sufficiently disciplined to relinquish some of the State's power for the sake of advancing the liberty of their constituents—especially for those constituents who have sacrificed so much. I believe there are few acts more noble for a lawmaker to undertake. I pray earnestly that the Committee would be strengthened to make this choice.

I ask the Committee to listen to the voice of the people and vote Ought to Pass, and I thank you for your time.

Respectfully,

Nathan C Gould

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