



Testimony in OPPOSITION to LD 436, An Act to Prohibit State Agencies from Promoting the COVID-19 Vaccination to Children

**Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services
March 31, 2025**

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and esteemed members of the Committee on Health and Human Services,

I am Caroline Zimmerman, Chair of the Maine Immunization Coalition (MIC). The MIC is a network of associations, health care systems, and providers working to protect Maine people across their lifespan against vaccine-preventable diseases, by increasing immunization rates through information sharing and collaboration. Our coalition includes: Maine Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics, MaineHealth, Maine Primary Care Association, Maine Public Health Association, Northern Light Health, Maine Families for Vaccines, Maine Community Action Partnership, Maine Medical Association, and Maine Osteopathic Association.

The MIC stands in strong opposition to LD 436, which seeks to prohibit any state departments and agencies from “promoting” the COVID-19 vaccine to anyone under the age of 18, through any means, including publicly accessible websites and educational materials. We are concerned this bill would unnecessarily restrict access to evidence-based information about the COVID-19 vaccine, promote anti-vaccine rhetoric, and aid in the spread of vaccine falsehoods.

Categorically and legislatively directing what our governing agencies can promote at any given point in time is a short-sighted response to a current social issue of distrust of science. Being able to have an evidence-informed discussion of prevention and treatment options, their risks and benefits, and how these options align with the patient's stated goals is foundational to providing health care to a population with diverse needs, beliefs, values, and medical conditions. This bill directly counters the ability of health care providers to share information that empowers their patients to make informed decisions that are best for them.

Information about the COVID-19 vaccine is publicly available online and through educational materials that are created and distributed by DHHS and Maine CDC. While these resources are not directly promoted to minors, they are publicly accessible, and therefore minors are able to access them like other members of the public. This bill could potentially limit public access to these digital and physical resources by attempting to prevent access to minors.

Commented [GU1]: strong opposition

Commented [GU2]: "short-sighted response that has the potential to exacerbate the current challenges with mistrust of science."

Commented [GU3]: The counter argument is that if they are publically available then no need to promote them.

State educational resources provide accurate, science-based information and recommendations on the COVID-19 vaccine that may be helpful to individuals deciding whether to get vaccinated. Any restriction to these resources threatens to create information voids, and if these voids are unaddressed, they allow misinformation about the COVID-19 vaccine to take root. Patients have important and valid information needs, and we must be able to answer their questions with evidence-based resources. Not doing so breeds further mistrust, confusion, and frustration with a health care system that is not responsive to their needs.

In conclusion, if passed, LD 436 would impede public access to information about the COVID-19 vaccine. We urge the committee to vote 'Ought Not to Pass' on LD 436.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Caroline Zimmerman
Chair, Maine Immunization Coalition