



March 30, 2025

Re: LD 871, An Act to Exempt All Persons, Including Health Care and Emergency Services Personnel, from COVID-19 Vaccine Requirements

To: Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and members of the Health and Human Services Committee

The Maine Chapter of the Freedom From Religion Foundation (MC-FFRF) writes AGAINST LD 871, An Act to Exempt All Persons, Including Health Care and Emergency Services Personnel, from COVID-19 Vaccine Requirements.

As was the case with LD 436, An Act to Prohibit State Agencies from Promoting the COVID-19 Vaccination to Children, I should be shocked and disappointed that such testimony is necessary. It is a sign of the times that I am not.

One of the most critical tools available to us in combating COVID-19 is vaccination. Vaccines have been proven to significantly reduce the severity of illness, prevent hospitalizations, and save lives. In many places, COVID-19 vaccine requirements have been implemented to protect not only individuals but the broader community as well. LD 871 is concerning, as it undermines the collective efforts to control the spread of the virus and puts vulnerable populations at unnecessary risk. As should be obvious from the specific personnel mentioned in the title.

LD 871 would be detrimental to public health, increase the strain on healthcare systems, and hinder the long-term recovery from the pandemic. It is essential that we prioritize the well-being of the community, protect the most vulnerable, and continue to rely on science-based measures to ensure the health and safety of all individuals.

The primary goal of COVID-19 vaccination is to protect individuals from severe illness, hospitalization, and death. But vaccines are also crucial in reducing the transmission of the virus. Even if a vaccinated individual does not experience severe illness, they can still carry the virus and pass it on to others. Vaccination significantly lowers the likelihood of viral spread, thereby contributing to the reduction of overall transmission in the community.

Exemption from vaccine requirements would leave many individuals unprotected and could increase the spread of the virus. Is there some confusion about this? Unvaccinated individuals are more likely to contract COVID-19, and the presence of unvaccinated individuals in the community



increases the likelihood of outbreaks. This places additional strain on healthcare systems and exposes more people to the risks associated with the virus, particularly those who are vulnerable or immunocompromised. Allowing widespread exemptions would only prolong the pandemic and hinder efforts to reach herd immunity, which is essential for controlling the virus.

One of the key arguments for vaccine mandates is that they help protect the most vulnerable members of society, including the elderly, immunocompromised individuals, and those with underlying health conditions. While vaccines may not offer 100% protection, they are an essential tool in reducing the likelihood of infection and minimizing the severity of symptoms for those who do contract the virus.

The prospect of allowing widespread exemptions to vaccine requirements would only worsen this strain on hospitals and healthcare workers. When vaccine requirements are relaxed or exempted, there is a greater chance that more people will get sick, leading to higher hospitalization rates, increased demand for medical resources, and longer wait times for care. Those with other medical conditions would be adversely affected by this increased demand, and the healthcare system cannot bear the added strain.

Vaccines have undergone rigorous testing and the scientific consensus is clear: vaccination is one of the most important tools in fighting the pandemic. Exempting individuals from vaccine requirements without valid medical reasons undermines the hard work of researchers, public health officials, and healthcare providers. Allowing broad exemptions from vaccine requirements disregards the evidence-based approach that has been successful in controlling the virus. Public health decisions must be made based on the best available science, and the overwhelming evidence supports the use of vaccines as a critical tool in the fight against COVID-19.

Furthermore, ACIP (Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices) strongly recommends that all healthcare workers be vaccinated against Hepatitis B, influenza, measles, mumps, rubella, and varicella. COVID-19 is merely a common sense addition to this list. The argument for personal freedom is often raised when discussing vaccine mandates and exemptions. While individual rights are important, they must be balanced with the responsibility to protect public health.

Beyond the direct health risks, there are also significant economic and social consequences associated with a rise in COVID-19 cases. As hospitals become overwhelmed and more individuals fall ill, the economy suffers from reduced productivity, increased absenteeism, and the economic burden of additional healthcare costs. Without broad participation in vaccination efforts, society will continue to face economic and social disruptions.



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While individual autonomy is important, it must be balanced with the responsibility to protect others, especially in times of public health emergencies. These exemptions ignore the science, risk public health, and undermine efforts to end the pandemic. We must prioritize the common good and ensure the health and safety of all members of our society.

For the above reasons, MC-FFRF urges the committee to vote “OUGHT NOT TO PASS”. Thank you for your time and consideration.

-Ray Vensel, President