

Testimony of William O'Neal

Director, Maine Bureau of Emergency Medical Services (Maine EMS)

Department of Public Safety

IN OPPOSITION of LD 871

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

Presented by Representative CIMINO of Bridgton

BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Public Hearing: Monday, March 31, 2025

Senator Ingwersen and honorable members of the Committee on Health and Human Services

My name is Wil O'Neal, and I am the Director of Maine Emergency Medical Services (Maine EMS)

I am testifying on behalf of the Maine Department of Public Safety and Maine EMS **in opposition to LD 871** "An Act to Exempt All Persons, Including Health Care and Emergency Services Personnel, from COVID-19 Vaccine Requirements"

The COVID-19 vaccine was a crucial part of the public health response that brought this deadly virus under control. Now that life is mostly back to normal, it is all too easy to forget the days of overcrowded hospitals, ventilator shortages, and grieving families that were a constant presence in those dark days. Our EMS workforce served on the front lines of healthcare during COVID-19 Pandemic. We saw the illness and death firsthand, and we shared the grief.

What if a series of simple mutations changes the COVID virus in a way that makes it significantly more dangerous? That uncertain future is our current reality. To proactively remove our ability to regulate provider vaccine requirements could unwittingly put our EMS providers and our patients at unnecessary risk.

In a pandemic, or an emergency of any scale, our ability to maintain a healthy workforce will be key to any successful outcome. I urge you to vote Ought Not to Pass on LD 871

Thank you, I am more than happy to answer any questions you may have.

Wil O'Neal