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Dear Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy and members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee,

I am in strong opposition to both LD 174 (An Act to Restore Religious Exemptions to Immunization Requirements) and LD 727 (An Act to Repeal Certain Immunization Requirements for Schools).

As a school nurse it is my responsibility to advocate and care for all of my students. One of my primary duties is to monitor the vaccination status of students, which is a public health issue that affects the well-being of everyone in a community. Prior to our current immunization law, more than 10% of students were not fully vaccinated, which put our communities below the level to provide herd immunity against many diseases. I fully supported the bill that eliminated religious and personal exemptions. A public referendum was overwhelmingly defeated by 72% of voters to uphold the law. In 2021, the law was finally implemented and vaccination rates improved.

In 2024, the vaccination rate of Maine school children was 95% - one of the highest in the country. This high rate of immunization provides Maine communities with a solid protection against many of the most communicable and dangerous vaccine-preventable illnesses.

Currently we have a measles outbreak in 20 states in our country, with no containment in sight. Now, more than ever, going backward on school vaccination requirements would be a huge detriment to the health of our students and communities, and it will cause harm that is otherwise preventable.

For these reasons, I oppose LD 174 and LD 727.

Sincerely,

Kristin Sanzone, MS, RN