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My name is Kez Bowman and I have been a nurse for 17 years. I spent the first 7 years of my career working in Haiti, where I cared for infants and children who suffered from infectious diseases that we virtually never see in the United States because of our successful vaccination programs. These diseases do not feel like a threat to the vast majority of the American public, because most of us have never seen a case of mumps or diphtheria, but from my experience, I would like to remind this committee that these illnesses are real and they claim lives.

Our greatest defense against preventable infectious diseases is a robust school immunization mandate which ensures that a large enough percentage of the population is inoculated against contagious disease. I have watched a Haitian infant die in the grips of horrendously painful muscle spasms from a tetanus infection and I can say with confidence that no one wants that for their child, their niece or nephew, or their neighbor. Please do not support changes to our currently effective school immunization mandates which are protecting our children from debilitating and life threatening preventable illnesses.

Thank you.