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

I am in strong opposition to both LD 174 LD (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 for the past year, one of my primary duties is to monitor the vaccination status of students. Prior to our current immunization law, more than 10% of students were not fully vaccinated - 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.

Currently we have a measles outbreak in 20 states in our country. Going backward on school vaccination requirements is not in the best interest of the health of our students and communities. We have many medically complex students in our school district whose health and safety depends on herd immunity.

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