

4/2/2025

Subject: Opposition to LD 727 – An Act to Repeal Certain Immunization Requirements for Schools

Chairman Rafferty, Senator Pierce, Senator Libby, and Education and Cultural Affairs Committee Members,

I am writing to express my concerns regarding the potential for exemptions to vaccination requirements as outlined LD 727 – An Act to Repeal Certain Immunization Requirements for Schools. While I understand that personal beliefs and individual rights are important and protected under the constitution to an extent, I firmly believe the greater community rights matter as well.

Vaccines are one of the most effective and proven ways to prevent the spread of infectious diseases. By removing requirements for children – one of the most vulnerable populations—we risk compromising the herd immunity. These exemptions not only endanger those individuals but also contribute to the resurgence of diseases that were once under control. We are seeing in other states how previously eradicated diseases are making resurgences due to a lack of vaccination. These lives are being lost due to a lack of information and widespread misinformation. These lives are being lost due and families are being burdened with unnecessary medical bills, funeral costs, grief, and interpersonal difficulties. The current outbreak of measles could be prevented by the MMR vaccination. The MMR (measles/mumps/rubella) vaccination is one of the required vaccinations this bill hopes to remove as a requirement. Other required vaccines are Tdap (diphtheria/tetanus/pertussis), poliomyelitis (commonly called polio), varicella (commonly called chicken pox), and MCV4 (meningococcal meningitis).

It takes 10-14 days for measles to incubate prior to showing symptoms and is still contagious without symptoms showing. It takes roughly 12-19 to recover from measles once symptoms show and longer in some cases. It takes 12-25 days for mumps to incubate prior to showing symptoms and is still contagious without symptoms showing. It takes roughly 10-17 days to recover from mumps once symptoms show and longer in some cases. It takes 12-23 days for rubella to incubate prior to showing symptoms and is still contagious without symptoms showing. It takes roughly 5-11 days to recover from mumps once symptoms show and longer in some cases. It takes 1-10 days for diphtheria to incubate prior to showing symptoms and is still contagious without symptoms showing. It takes roughly 1-6 weeks to recover from diphtheria once symptoms show and longer in some cases. It takes 4-21 days for pertussis to incubate prior to showing symptoms and is still contagious without symptoms showing. Pertussis can be

shared for up to 2 weeks once symptoms start without antibiotics. It takes up to 3 weeks for polio to incubate prior to showing symptoms and is still contagious without symptoms showing. It takes roughly 1-10 weeks to recover from polio once symptoms show and longer in some cases. It takes 10-21 days for chicken pox to incubate prior to showing symptoms and is still contagious without symptoms showing. It takes roughly 15-28 days to recover from chicken pox once symptoms show and longer in some cases. It takes 2-10 days for meningococcal meningitis to incubate prior to showing symptoms and is still contagious without symptoms showing. It takes roughly 3-10 days to recover from meningococcal meningitis once symptoms show and longer in some cases.

It is essential that we prioritize the collective health and safety of our community. It is in no one's best interest – the child's, the parent's, the teacher's, the peers', the healthcare providers – to be treating these preventable illnesses for this amount of time. It greatly impacts children's education when they miss school. For a child or teacher to miss a significant amount of time due to a preventable illness from removing vaccine requirements is unwarranted. Additionally, vaccines work when there are not mutations, mutations happen with widespread outbreaks.

I urge you to consider the broader implications of allowing exemptions and to prioritize the health of the community over personal beliefs when individuals are in public spaces such as schools. This is beyond allowing people to make choices with their bodies when they are also choosing to socialize or be in public spaces while infected or the possibility of being infected. Our public health policies such as requiring vaccinations to attend schools must reflect the importance of science and collective well-being. If parents do not want to vaccinate their children, they have options for homeschooling or online schooling that still allows for children to receive education. Up to 40% of Maine's population is considered vulnerable when looking at health conditions, age, and access to healthcare services. Our state would greatly struggle if our already overburdened healthcare system became burdened with preventable diseases.

Thank you for your time and attention to this critical issue. I hope you will take a strong stance in support of vaccination requirements for the benefit of public health.

Sincerely,

Reverend Brooklin Jones-Banahan, LCSW