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As a school nurse my testimony may differ substantially from many of my colleagues. I value vaccines, but I also value informed consent, and patient autonomy. Vaccines are not without risks. While rare they can have serious or even fatal consequences. I also value scientific data and I think the vaccines required for school entry in the state of Maine and the vaccine mandates do not make much sense from a scientific standpoint.

Why do we mandate varicella, and meningococcal but not Hepatitis A or B? Why DON'T we mandate vaccination for school staff? And why don't we mandate yearly influenza vaccine for STAFF and students? The school vaccine mandates also do not match the CDC immunization schedule, which causes tension between providers, parents, and schools. It is my opinion that we should re-evaluate the vaccination mandates for schools to be more scientifically based on vaccine safety, efficacy, disease prevalence, and severity. And allow more flexibility in the mandates to allow for age differences, alternative schedules, and provider-parent determination. For example I have a 7th grade student who's provider told their mom that they could wait another 2 years before getting the Tdap according to the immunization schedule (even though it is a required vaccination for 7th grade entry). I have many students who are 4 when they start school and aren't due for their final vaccinations until their 5 year WCC and for many that can be later in the year. Re-determining the vaccinations required to more closely match the vaccination schedule (as well which are most critical) and allowing more provider flexibility, would eliminate many of these concerns.