

Daniel Battin  
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LD 174

I am speaking in favor of this bill. 45 out of 50 states allow for a religious exemption for families with a deeply held belief. We charge school taxes to all residents, but then we have in essence prohibited certain families from even a chance to attend either public school or a private religious school because of their sincerely held religious beliefs. I believe we as a state should stand for freedom in this area, like most states do. There is not a significantly higher rate of disease in the 45 states that do allow religious exemptions compared to the five that do not.

Secondly, as an administrator of a church that operates 5 private schools in Maine, we have been significantly hurt by the loss of the religious exemption in Maine since 2021. There are a lot of families that want to send their children to our schools where they would get a quality education, but they will not get vaccinated so cannot attend. This has hurt our schools enrollment and bottom line. Some schools have lost enough enrollment because of this, that they may be forced to close. Our schools and students do not receive any public funding or vouchers like in some states, however our schools are forced to abide by this oppressive 2021 law whether or not we want to. I support LD 174 and encourage its passage.