

Diane Zavotsky  
Embden  
LD 727

Senator Rafferty, representative Murphy, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

My name is Diane, and I am a family physician from Embden. I strongly oppose LD174 and LD727 because I believe our state should continue to protect children and communities from preventable infectious diseases.

In 2019 Maine voters overwhelmingly approved vaccine laws by referendum that significantly limited non-medical exemptions, vaccination rates rose, and more of our children are protected from illnesses, such as measles, whooping cough, and meningitis and epiglottitis caused by bacterial pathogens. Several of these conditions are now so rare that medical colleagues just a few years younger than me have never seen a case of them. That fact lulls us into a false sense of security, and an overinflated concern about harms and risks from vaccines. In fact, the risk of serious bleeding from aspirin in some studies is increased by up to 70%. By comparison, adverse events from an MMR vaccine occur less than .03% of the time. We are taught in pharmacology courses in medical school that vaccines are the safest drug that we can prescribe, unequivocally.

I have not personally seen a death from measles or Haemophilus influenza type B infection, but I have seen a six week old hospitalized from whooping cough during an outbreak caused largely by unvaccinated school children in a community. I personally treated a child left permanently, blind and hearing impaired after meningococcal meningitis before that vaccine was available.

I have also traveled to Belize and Guatemala as a medical volunteer and seen how desperate parents in the under resourced countries are to have vaccines for their children. They are much more intimately aware of the devastating effects of these illness is and are incredulous to learn that American parents refuse vaccines.

Do not reverse the will of the people and do not ignore long standing, proven public health science. Passing these two bills would do both. I urge you to vote "ought not to pass" on LD 174 and LD727.

Respectfully, Diane Zavotsky, MD