

Jerry Dodge
Denmark
LD 174

Dear Chairmen Rafferty and Committee Members,

My name is Jerry Dodge.

I am writing today to ask you to support LD 174 An Act to Reinstate Religious Exemptions to Immunizations.

My family has been severely and adversely affected by the removal of religious exemptions to vaccinations.

My wife and children are Christian Scientists and belong to the Christian Science Church in Fryeburg, ME. My wife was unable to file a religious exemption and lost her job in the healthcare field. In a period when we have a severe health care staff shortage, it makes little sense to prohibit someone who wishes to work the ability to do so. The facility in Maine she left has yet to fill her position and that was three years ago. She is now employed at a hospital in New Hampshire where she was able to file a religious exemption to the flu vaccine.

Since my boys were barred from attending private or public school, we went to the Maine Connections Academy website to sign them up for remote school. The site had an entire section dedicated to the adherence to Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 dealing with anti-discrimination. The organization states in writing that it would never discriminate based on color, ethnicity, religion, physical or mental disability, age, marital status, gender identity, sexual orientation, or immigration status. The one group they do discriminate against? The unvaccinated child. My boys were denied access to online education through a program that would have been conducted in our home at our kitchen table.

My family doesn't live in a bubble, we go to the supermarket, the movies, the beach, the library, we shop at the mall, we eat at restaurants, etc. My sons go to their friends' houses, sleepovers, camping trips, etc. We can do anything within the towns and state we live in. Yet my wife is denied access to employment and my children are denied access to an education.

People have said, "People have a choice, they can home school." To a teenage boy whose only desire is to attend school with his friends and play baseball for his school, this is not a choice.

I ask you to stand up for the rights of my wife to go back to work in Maine. And I ask you to please stand up for the rights of my children to get an education in Maine.

Please reinstate religious exemptions to vaccinations. Please support LD 174.

Sincerely,

Jerry Dodge
Denmark, ME