

Marina Penalver
Peaks Island
LD 727

Please Oppose LD 727 – Protect Maine’s Vaccine Law

Dear Honorable Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Public Affairs,

I’m writing to urge you to vote NO on LD 727. This bills would weaken Maine’s strong vaccine law, which helps keep our children, schools, businesses, and healthcare centers safe from preventable diseases.

I teach 8th grade science in a public school in Portland. I currently care for my 88-year old mother at home as she is being treated for cancer. My health, my mother's health, and my students' vaccination status are inextricably linked. Current vaccination laws reassure me that the students in my classroom will not be introducing the threat of highly contagious and dangerous diseases like diphtheria, rubella or measles. If a students' family refuses to vaccinate, that choice impacts everyone that who interacts with their child, and beyond. As a teacher, I have no way of knowing which child's vaccination status might harm me or my loved ones. Vaccines aren’t just a personal decision—they are a public health responsibility. As a Mainer, and a state employee, I want our state to continue following science and protecting all children as well as those who live and work with them.

Vaccination success and the passing of our elders has lulled us all into a false sense of security. We no longer fear the iron lung that once held thousands of children who couldn't breath due to diaphragms (the muscle that pulls air into the lungs) being paralyzed by polio. Are you aware that among other long term effect, measles can completely wipe out all past immunities in a victim, or leave young men infertile? Mumps, that funny swollen face disease, can cause infertility in women. Who among us has witnessed the painful suffocation of the mucous veil over the throat, formed when diphtheria grips a child? Without vaccines, some could carry diphtheria germs yet be unaffected, unwittingly spreading it to those whose immune defenses leave them vulnerable. Without required vaccinations we'll once more learn firsthand the meaning and fear a "Typhoid Mary" can induce in society.

LD 727 would eliminate vaccine requirements altogether. This terrifies me. This change would leave our communities vulnerable to outbreaks of disease, threatening lives and our state’s economy. We’re already seeing surges in diseases like measles in states with weaker laws, and the deaths that have resulted. Maine shouldn’t and must not be next.

I beg you to stand up for public health, our schools, and the will of Maine voters, who overwhelmingly upheld the vaccine law at the ballot box in 2020 with a majority in every county.

Vote “Ought Not to Pass” on LD 727.