

**Naneen Chace-Ortiz
Westbrook, ME**

LD 174: Non-medical exemptions for vaccines – OPPOSE

LD 727: Eliminating vaccine requirements – OPPOSE

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

My name is Naneen Chace-Ortiz, and I live in Westbrook. I am writing to you today to advocate for the continued strength of Maine's vaccine law and to strongly oppose LD 174 and LD 727. These bills would undermine the significant progress we have made in protecting our communities from preventable diseases.

Maine's current vaccine law, passed in 2019, has been a resounding success. We have seen a substantial increase in vaccination rates, achieving the crucial 95% herd immunity threshold for the first time. This has resulted in tangible benefits: fewer disease outbreaks, safer environments for our children in schools, and greater security for businesses and healthcare centers. Critically, it also offers vital protection to vulnerable individuals who cannot receive vaccines for medical reasons.

LD 174 seeks to reintroduce non-medical exemptions, and LD 727 proposes the complete elimination of vaccine requirements. Learning from the experience of states with weaker vaccine laws, we know that these changes would lead to a resurgence of preventable diseases like measles. Maine must not regress.

My perspective as both a nurse and a Unitarian Universalist informs my deep commitment to public health and the inherent worth of every individual. Vaccination is a fundamental act of community care, ensuring the safety and well-being of all. Major world religions, including ours, do not forbid vaccines and in fact encourage them. We must continue to prioritize scientific evidence and protect all children in Maine, particularly those with compromised immune systems.

I urge you to stand firm in support of public health, our schools, and the clear mandate of Maine voters, who overwhelmingly affirmed the importance of our vaccine law in the 2020 referendum with strong support across the state.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this critical issue. I strongly urge the committee to vote "Ought Not to Pass" on LD 174 and LD 727.

Sincerely,

Naneen Chace-Ortiz, MSN, RN

Naneen Chace-Ortiz
Westbrook, ME