

**Testimony in Opposition to LD 174: An Act to Restore Religious Exemptions to
Immunization Requirements AND LD 727: An Act to Repeal Certain Immunization
Requirements for Schools**

Dear Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and Members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee,

My name is Brandie Rubin, I a resident of Scarborough, and I strongly oppose LD 174 and LD 727.

In March 2020, nearly 73% of Mainers that voted, supported LD 798, now PL 154, which eliminated Philosophical and Religious exemptions for school vaccinations. Since then, myself, and many others, including members of this committee, have stood up here to encourage this committee to keep the vaccine law as is. Both chambers continue to vote in favor of keeping this law as it is. The fact of the matter is, no organized religions oppose vaccinations. Vaccinations are for the good of our community as they protect those most at risk for vaccine preventable illnesses like measles and polio.

Since this law went into effect in September 2021, vaccine exemption rates for school children went from 6.2% in 2018-2019 to 0.9% in 2022-2023 (Source 2022-2023 Maine School Immunization Assessment Report). According to data obtained from the CDC, a 95% vaccination rate is needed for herd immunity against measles. This means that prior to this law, our school aged children were at a heightened risk for contracting measles because enough kids weren't vaccinated. Since inception of this law, our vaccination rate meets the minimum percentage needed to keep measles out of our schools.

The current Trump administration has appointed known antivax propagandists into key positions in HHS and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, and this has already been shown to be harmful to public health. Our strong vaccine laws will continue to help protect Mainers against these anti vaccine activists who are now holding key positions in the United States. In 2019, measles was considered eradicated from the United States. Unfortunately, due to anti vaccine propagandists, like Robert F Kennedy Jr, we are now seeing a surge in Measles cases, largely in states like Texas, where vaccination rates have dropped below threshold. 2 children have now died from complications of measles. We must continue to keep Maine school children safe from this.

Maine has held public hearings, debated this in both chambers, considered amendments, and created this law without religious exemptions. Despite all this work, I would ask you to consider why these particular bill sponsors continue to ignore healthcare professionals and why they are so adamant on harming children. I urge you to please uphold the will of Maine residents, stand on the side of Physicians and all other healthcare professionals, and oppose LD 174 and LD 727.