

Annie Powers
Orono
LD 174

Testimony in OPPOSITION to LD 174 and LD 727
Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

April 7, 2025

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

My name is Dr. Annie Powers, and I am a pediatrician in Bangor, Maine. I am writing in strong opposition to both LD 174 LD (An Act to Restore Religious Exemptions to Immunization Requirements) and LD 727 (An Act to Repeal Certain Immunization Requirements for Schools).

As a pediatrician, I have seen children die or have life-long disabilities from vaccine-preventable diseases. The effectiveness and importance of vaccines in keeping children safe and healthy really cannot be overstated - there is no other public health intervention that even comes close. And I counsel parents and families every day on the importance, the effectiveness and the safety of vaccinations. Most people are not familiar with many of the illnesses that vaccines protect them against - because due to the effectiveness of vaccines, those illnesses are not very common anymore. And so people forget that infants and children would get terribly sick or die from illnesses like Whooping cough, Polio, bacterial meningitis and Measles.

Prior to our current immunization law, our vaccination rates were declining to a dangerous level where illnesses like Measles and Pertussis (ie, Whooping cough) would once again be able to cause horrendous morbidity and mortality among our children. Currently, we are seeing this play out across our country and we are seeing the devastating effects that low vaccination rates have on communities. Just today, a second child died of Measles in Texas - a child died of a vaccine preventable disease. This death did not need to happen, this child did not need to die.

I fully supported the bill that eliminated religious and personal exemptions. A public referendum was overwhelmingly defeated by 72% of voters to uphold this important law. Mainers understand the importance of science and evidence based public health policy. When the law was finally implemented in 2021, vaccination rates started to improve. In 2024, the vaccination rate of Maine school children one of the highest in the country and I want to see that trend continue - for my patients, for my community and for my own children.

Thank you for your consideration.

I respectfully urge you to vote "Ought Not to Pass" on these bills.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Your name
Annie Powers, MD/PhD
Orono, ME