

Candice McElroy
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LD 174

I am a family physician, a parent of children in public school in Maine, and a member of the MSAD72 school board. I am writing in opposition to LD 174. Vaccines are safe and are proven to save lives. By virtue of the things we have been exposed to during our years of training and medical practice, physicians tend to fear many things: accidents, choking, gun violence, and serious illnesses. We do not fear vaccines, though, because we know the science behind them and recognize the public health impact of widespread vaccination. It is part of the public contract that those of us who can receive vaccines do so to protect the very few who cannot or who do not have adequate immune responses to vaccines due to age or immunocompromised status or rare vaccine reactions or allergies. By allowing people to elect not to vaccinate their children under religious exemptions and then still send their children to public schools, they would be violating the rights of the other children and staff in the schools by exposing them to vaccine-preventable illnesses. We have just had the first deaths due to measles, a vaccine-preventable illness that was once considered eradicated in the US, in over a decade because of large populations of unvaccinated individuals in other states. As a physician who has been in medicine for over 20 years, I have never seen a case of measles and yet I fear that it will be on our doorstep in Maine soon if we relax our protections for our Maine school children. I have patients who are immunocompromised and despite having had prior vaccines would be at even greater risk if they were exposed to vaccine-preventable illnesses in the classrooms of our Maine public schools. Please do not make our schools less safe by allowing religious exemptions for vaccines.

Thank you,
Candice McElroy, MD