

# Maine Chapter

INCORPORATED IN MAINE

American Academy of Pediatrics

DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN®



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30 Association Drive, Box 190

Manchester, ME 04351

office: 207-622-3374

[www.maineaap.org](http://www.maineaap.org)

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## Good morning Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and esteemed members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs,

My name is Alyssa Goodwin, M.D., and I am a resident of Brunswick. I am here today to testify **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**.

I am disappointed to be standing before you once again, advocating to protect my young patients from the very real threat of vaccine-preventable diseases. In 2019, the Maine Legislature passed critical legislation requiring compliance with the state's immunization requirements for daycare and school entry, removing both philosophical and religious exemptions. In 2020, the people of Maine overwhelmingly upheld this legislation at the ballot box.

As a pediatrician, a school physician, and the chair of the Maine Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics School Health Committee, I can assure you: **these laws have saved lives**.

In 2000, measles was declared eliminated in the United States. Yet in just the first three months of 2025, there have been nearly 400 reported cases—including the first measles-related deaths in a decade. These outbreaks began in communities with low vaccination rates, allowing this highly contagious disease to spread rapidly. Thanks to Maine's strong vaccine policies, we have so far been spared the outbreaks occurring in other parts of the country.

Maine's requirement that students be vaccinated—except in cases of valid, evidence-based medical exemptions—has resulted in measurable and significant improvements in our vaccination rates. Before the 2019 law, Maine lagged behind other states, with exemption rates hovering around 6% and vaccination rates of 94%. Even as the legislation was challenged, exemption rates steadily declined, reaching approximately 1% and vaccination rates increased to over 97% based on the most recent data from the 2023–2024 school year. This led to crossing a critical threshold - that of community immunity. Communities need vaccination rates at or above 95% to prevent infectious disease outbreaks like those currently happening in the Southwest.

At a time when national vaccination rates are falling, Maine's rates are improving. This is a direct result of our strong, science-based policy.

Every day, I talk with families about the safety and efficacy of vaccines. Many of them are fearful that the protections they rely on to keep their children healthy in daycare and school might be taken away. They are grateful to be raising their children in a state where they can count on the protection that comes from community-wide immunization.

Unfortunately, the national conversation is increasingly dominated by misinformation and pseudoscience. But Mainers have demanded better—and they continue to deserve better.

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**Vaccines work. Vaccines save lives. LD 174 and LD 727 will not move Maine forward.** These bills do not address a legitimate problem. The people of Maine have already spoken clearly and decisively. We stand with science. And we stand with our youngest and most vulnerable citizens.

Thank you for your time and your continued commitment to the health and safety of Maine's children.

Alyssa Goodwin, M.D.

Reference:

<https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/infectious-disease/immunization/publications/2024/2023-24%20Maine%20School%20Immunization%20Assessment%20Report.pdf>