

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. Melissa Burch, and I have been a pediatrician in Bangor for 25 years. I'd like to express my opposition to LD 174 and LD 727.

Vaccinations have dramatically improved the lives of children in America. Because I started my medical training back in the 1980's, I have a vivid memory of children with meningitis dying in infancy or living with deafness and disability. I saw children with pertussis coughing so severely it seemed they would never get another breath. When I was 16, meningitis claimed a high school classmate who went home sick one day and died the next.

My younger colleagues have not lived through these horrors, thanks to the continued development of safe and highly effective vaccines.

Maine now has an excellent law which protects all Maine kids in school and childcare from vaccine-preventable illness. Maine law is carefully targeted, covering not every vaccine, but only those against the most life-threatening and highly communicable disease. This law protects the immunosuppressed children who can't be vaccinated, and it protects the very young and the elderly in the households of those schoolchildren who would otherwise bring these serious infections home. Immunizing kids helps protect everyone.

LD 174 and LD 727 would turn back the clock, and summon severe preventable diseases back into Maine schools and child care.

Because of the recent spread of measles in unvaccinated children in Texas and New Mexico, many parents have contacted our office asking if their own child is safe in Maine. I can now confidently answer yes, thanks to the state law removing non-medical exemptions which went into effect in 2021. Statewide, the current kindergarten class now has 97% vaccination coverage for measles and

other serious infection, solidly above the 95% needed to provide group protection.

Mainers support childhood immunization, and showed this clearly in the 2020 immunization referendum.

Please keep Maine kids safe. Please vote OUGHT NOT TO PASS on LD 174 and LD 727.

Thank you,

Melissa Burch, MD

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