

Ana Solis
Augusta
LD 727

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 Ana Solis, and I'm a parent from the town of Augusta. I very strongly oppose LD 174 and LD 727 because I believe our state should continue to protect children and communities from preventable diseases.

In 2019, Maine passed one of the strongest vaccine laws in the country. It was a major step forward to keep our schools and child care centers safe. Since then, our vaccination rates have gone up, and we've seen a big drop in families using non-medical exemptions. This is a good thing. It means more kids are protected, and fewer are at risk of serious illness.

These two bills represent great danger. LD 174 would bring back religious exemptions and LD727 would remove vaccine requirements altogether. The country is currently dealing with the consequences of low vaccination rates, legitimized by pseudoscience and anti-vaccine sentiment, as we deal with a measles outbreak in TX. An outbreak that has already taken the lives of two healthy children, has hospitalized dozens and impacted hundreds (likely, an underestimate). The fact that these bills are being considered as these events unfold is extremely irresponsible. Vaccines are not just a personal choice — they protect everyone, especially those that cannot be vaccinated because of certain health conditions.

I would like to share a story: When I was 6 months old, I acquired a serious infection caused by pneumococcal bacteria that evolved into a serious case of bacterial meningitis. Doctors prepared my parents for the worst, but I survived, although with permanent hearing loss on my left ear. Many years later, while in high school, I got sick (likely with something like the flu) but I remember telling my mom that I had a fever and my neck hurt. My mom rushed me to my doctor, and upon mentioning to him the pain in my neck she started sobbing and shaking uncontrollably. My doctor consoled her and reassured her that the nightmare that took place many years ago was not back, that this was not meningitis (fever and neck stiffness are symptoms of meningitis). It was the first time I was confronted with my mom showing that type of anxiety, worry and distress. It was the first time I truly noticed just how traumatic me being sick was for her and my father. Pneumococcal infections that can develop into meningitis are now greatly preventable due to a vaccine that children receive as part of the regular vaccine schedule recommended by the CDC, and I am glad my children can receive some protection against what clearly was very dangerous to me.

As a mom, I want all children to attend a safe school environment, and that our schools are doing everything in their power to prevent outbreaks of preventable diseases. We should not legitimize misinformation and then allow for low vaccination rates to cause outbreaks that can lead to tragedy.

Vaccines have been proven time and time again to be safe and effective. They keep our children and vulnerable members of society safe. Public health should be based on science, not politics or misinformation. Maine voters already showed in 2020 that we support strong vaccine laws. We voted to keep the law in place. These new bills go against the will of the people and put our kids at risk.

Please don't turn back the clock. Please keep Maine moving forward. I respectfully urge you to vote "ought not to pass" on LD 174 and LD 727.

Thank you.

Ana Solis