



Testimony in OPPOSITION to LD 727 and 174

LD 174 - An Act to Restore Religious Exemptions to Immunization Requirements

LD 727 - An Act to Repeal Certain Immunization Requirements for Schools

Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

April 7th, 2025

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

My name is Northe Saunders, and I serve as the Director of Maine Families for Vaccines and the Executive Director of SAFE Communities Coalition. We work to promote vaccine confidence and protect families from vaccine-preventable disease through strong, evidence-based public health policy.

I respectfully urge you to vote "Ought Not to Pass" on LD 174 and LD 727. Anti-vaccine legislation like this should not advance in the legislature and has no place in Maine.

I first testified before this committee in March of 2019 to support LD 798, removing the religious and philosophical exemptions for school entry requirements. I waited for over 8 hours for my turn to speak. I waited for all those hours because I knew that passing that law would help protect my kids and kids all across Maine from diseases we could prevent. At that time, I had two kids, ages 3 and 1. Maine had the worst immunization rates in the nation for pertussis, and there were outbreaks all across the state. I rejoiced when the legislature finally passed the law because I knew that our schools would be safer. I also worked hard to protect the law from the people's veto in March of 2020, volunteering countless hours to make phone calls and motivate voters to turn out. And as I'm sure you are well aware, Mainers overwhelmingly supported keeping Maine's vaccine laws strong.

We are tragically seeing the negative impact of loose immunization laws right now. Kids have died of pertussis in Louisiana and measles in Texas. We must continue to protect our

kids here in Maine. I now have three school-aged children. I'm so grateful that when I drop them off at school, I know they, and their friends, are headed into a safe environment. I have one less thing to worry about. That Maine's schools are protected by strong laws that our legislators passed and Maine voters overwhelmingly supported at our ballot box. Let's not go backwards. Let's not open our schools up to disease. Please continue to protect Maine's kids.

On behalf of the families, providers, and community leaders we represent, I respectfully urge you to reject LD 174 and LD 727.

Thank you..

Northe Saunders
Director, Maine Families for Vaccines
Portland