

Marya Goettsche Spurling, MD, FAAFP
New Sharon
LD 727

To the distinguished members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, my name is Dr. Marya Goettsche Spurling and I am writing in strong opposition to both LD 174 and LD 727, bills that would include exemptions or eliminate school vaccine requirements.

Maine has successfully improved its childhood vaccination rates to the necessary levels to prevent outbreaks of contagious and deadly childhood diseases. Vaccines are one of the major public health successes of the 20th century. Visit any of our old cemeteries in Maine and you will see headstones of children who tragically died of common diseases that I, as a Family Physician practicing in the 21st century, have never even seen thanks to the success of vaccines. My grandfather's sister died at age nine from polio. We are only a few generations removed from this and it would be foolish to forget or ignore the wisdom of science.

To those who suggest that vaccination is a "personal choice," my response is that it is as much a personal choice as driving within the speed limit, or choosing to refrain from driving while under the influence of alcohol. That "personal choice" can have deadly effects on innocent others if a poor choice is made. We need to protect our most vulnerable by continuing to require full vaccination for school entry. Vaccines are proven safe, and only those with a true medical exemption should be permitted to defer them within a school setting.

I include here a link to data regarding the current measles outbreak in the United States, which demonstrates the locations of the outbreaks overlaid on state- and county-based vaccination rates. You can see that Maine is strongly protected, thanks to the laws that have been passed and reinforced in recent years. Thanks to these laws, we have avoided an outbreak and will remain protected. When misinformation can easily spread like wildfire on social media and can convince worried parents that it is better to keep their children unvaccinated, we need strong laws without loopholes or exemptions to maintain the necessary protective rates of vaccination.

One hundred years ago childhood deaths were accepted as a sad reality. We no longer accept that reality and we rely on our medical advances over the past century.

Vaccines are simple yet miraculous, and they are THE reason that I don't have to worry about my children or my patients contracting deadly contagious diseases. I hope you will understand this and unanimously vote that these bills ought not to pass.

<https://gisanddata.maps.arcgis.com/apps/dashboards/dd314001921f4d2eac160f89ded0b49a>