



**Testimony of Maine Public Health Association In Opposition to:
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
Room 208, Cross State Office Building
Monday, April 7, 2025

Good morning Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs. My name is Rebecca Boulos. I am a resident of South Portland and executive director of Maine Public Health Association.

MPHA is the state's oldest, largest, and most diverse association for public health professionals. We represent more than 850 individual members and nearly 70 organizations across the state. MPHA works to optimize the health of people and places in Maine through advocacy, education, partnerships, and public health workforce development. We are not tied to a national agenda, which means we are responsive to the needs of Maine's communities, and we take that responsibility seriously.

MPHA opposes LD 174: "An Act to Restore Religious Exemptions to Immunization Requirements" and LD 727: "An Act to Repeal Certain Immunization Requirements for Schools." These bills aim to repeal [Maine's immunization requirements for school-entry](#), which remove religious and philosophical exemptions. These requirements were supported by 72.5% of Maine voters in a March 2020 referendum. In that referendum, [every Maine county](#) voted to [reject a people's veto effort](#) to repeal this vaccine law. In other words, Maine voters overwhelmingly support strong immunization requirements to ensure safe learning environments and communities for everyone.

The safety, efficacy, and cost-effectiveness of routine childhood vaccines have been well-established and are supported by sound, scientific studies. The legality and constitutionality of school and daycare immunization requirements held in all 50 states has been vigorously upheld in courts, and these laws have led to increased immunization rates and a reduction in U.S. morbidity and mortality associated with infectious diseases. Data from immunization surveys indicate that states with stronger immunization laws have higher immunization rates and sufficient herd immunity to prevent outbreaks.¹ Likewise, studies suggest vaccination requirements may reduce health disparities by improving vaccination rates among racial and ethnic minorities and children in low-income communities.²

Since 2020, Maine has seen a steady increase in childhood vaccination rates. In the 2023-2024 Maine CDC School Assessment report, 97.4% of Kindergarteners were vaccinated against measles; this is higher than the minimum threshold needed for community immunity to measles (95%). As measles spreads in other parts of the country, our current law is helping keep Maine communities safe. We believe these bills threaten public health. As such, we respectfully ask you to vote LD 174 and LD 727 "Ought Not to Pass." Thank you for your consideration.

¹ Richwine CJ, Dor A, Moghtaderi A. [Do stricter immunization laws improve coverage? Evidence from the repeal of non-medical exemptions for school mandated vaccines](#). National Bureau of Economic Research. Working paper 25847. May 2019.

² Guide to Community Preventive Services. [Vaccination programs: Requirements for childcare, school, and college attendance](#).