

Additional Testimony of Lani Graham, MD, MPH

In Opposition to LD's 174 & 727

Before the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, April 7, 2025

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, Members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, I am adding some additional testimony, partially in response to questions asked by member of the Committee.

1. What about additives to vaccines that might be harmful to children?

Ans: The Children's Hospital in Philadelphia has prepared a good handout on this. I will submit that through the portal as well.

2. Isn't it true that the Amish, don't get vaccines, and have no Autism?

Ans: Studies do seem to show that vaccine hesitancy is more common among the Amish, the vaccine rate is reduced, not absent.¹ The idea that the Amish experience no autism appears to be a myth. Several studies done comparing the Amish with other populations show no difference in autism rates between Amish and non-Amish populations.²

I also wanted to underscore again the importance of several issues I brought up spontaneously in my in-person testimony.

1. There are factors occurring now that are likely to make Maine children increasingly vulnerable to infectious diseases, making vaccinations more important. The United States work of Agency for International Development (USAID) is being halted. The Trump administration intends to terminate the United States' financial support for Gavi, the organization that has helped purchase critical vaccines for children in developing countries, saving millions of lives over the past quarter century.³ Stopping support for vaccines will result in the deaths of children abroad, but it also means that illnesses that might have been stopped in another country may now come to our door. Furthermore, support for public health nationally and in Maine is being eroded. This means that we will be less prepared for what does come to our state and emphasizes the importance of being as strong as we can be to face those challenges.
2. Medically vulnerable children who cannot receive vaccines because of very serious illness, deserve safe access to public schools. While these exemptions are relatively rare, in the 2022-2023 school year, 0.8% of Maine's kindergarten students, or about 11,700 students, had medical exemptions from required

¹ <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33478791/>

² <https://www.mastermindbehavior.com/post/do-amish-kids-get-autism>

³ The Trump administration intends to terminate the United States' financial support for Gavi, the organization that has helped purchase critical vaccines for children in developing countries, saving millions of lives over the past quarter century, and to significantly scale back support for efforts to combat malaria, one of the biggest killers globally.

childhood vaccines, a decrease from the previous year's 1.5%. Those children have no choice about receiving a vaccine. Due to the very contagious nature of some illnesses, such as measles, it would be dangerous to attend a school where that school had not reached the 95% herd immunity level. A single healthy, asymptomatic child with measles could represent death sentence for one of those 11,700 children.

Thank you again for your attention. Please vote ought not to pass on these two bills.