

April 8, 2025

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

I was grateful to be able to attend Monday's committee hearing in follow up to the written testimony I submitted electronically on April 4th (below) regarding **LD 174** and **LD727** while my daughter represented South Portland during Girls' Day at the State House.

After bearing witness to the hearing, I wanted to clarify my position as a Nationally Certified School Nurse serving my home community (and alma mater) of South Portland, one of the most culturally diverse districts in our state.

I am incredibly proud of the work our district and our state has done in welcoming and caring for our New Mainer population. Their presence enriches our community immensely. I would like to **confirm as true** the statements made by Portland School Nurse Rebecca Bell regarding our intake process and immunization requirements for **ALL students** in the Maine public school system.

Our newly arrived immigrant families seek safety and peace in our communities. Having often endured unimaginable trauma before their arrival to our home state, New Mainers are among the most vulnerable of our neighbors. Often, as Nurse Bell described, students arrive to our schools having received numerous vaccinations prior to or upon entering the U.S.. In the case that a student requires additional doses to meet vaccination requirements, we are **very** fortunate to partner with the team of public health nurses mentioned at the hearing by Maine's CDC Director Dr. Puthiery Va, and our [School Based Health Clinics run by Greater Portland Health](#) to vaccinate students as needed. Their work ensures we **maintain herd immunity** and protect the most vulnerable among us—namely the very small number of students who have medical exemptions and **cannot** receive immunizations.

Before my current role at Brown Elementary School, I had the privilege of working as an [Immunization Nurse](#) during the rollout of the COVID vaccine with Northern Light Home Care and Hospice. We vaccinated in every corner of our state, removing barriers to accessing care and protecting some of our most remote and underserved communities in Maine.

The return to full time in-person learning in the 2021-22 school year coincided with a great wave of immigration into the United States. My school welcomed 40 New Mainers throughout that year. During that time, I was able to combine my roles as school and immunization nurse to support COVID vaccine clinics in school, and to deliver vaccines to families in their temporary housing as needed. Our school and community achieved a high vaccination rate, greatly reducing the risk of life threatening illness.

There is much more I could say regarding the work our school nurses do each day to ensure the well being of our communities. Vaccine compliance is chief among our duties. I urge the committee to maintain our law and protect our school communities.

Thank you,

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April 4, 2025

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

I oppose **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 will weaken Maine's school immunization laws and pose increased risks to the health of Maine's communities.

As a nurse serving our public schools, I have dedicated myself to caring for our youngest and most vulnerable population. Immunizations are crucial to children's health, protecting them from preventable and debilitating diseases. One of my primary duties is monitoring the immunization status of students in my school. In our district, we have a significant population of newly arrived immigrants who escaped untold strife and risked their lives to seek refuge in our country. Many are in the process of receiving their vaccinations, and are as such unprotected from illness.

As of March 27, 2025, jurisdictions in 20 states have reported confirmed cases of measles; 75% of those 483 cases have affected unvaccinated children under the age of 19. Measles, a vaccine-preventable infectious disease, is extremely contagious and cases multiply rapidly in outbreak areas. We cannot risk the health of our students and communities by repealing Maine immunization laws.

I urge you to vote against **LD 174** and **LD 727** (which is exceptionally vague) to protect the health and well-being of all Mainers.

Thank you,

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