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Testimony in Support of LD 51
“An Act to Restore Religious and Philosophical Exemptions to Immunization Requirements”

Good morning Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs. I am Representative Billy Bob Faulkingham and I am here to testify in favor of LD 51, *“An Act to Restore Religious and Philosophical Exemptions to Immunization Requirements”*.

The history of this bill is known to everyone in this room, so I won't waste time recounting it. Representative Drinkwater's bill would very simply reinstate the religious and philosophical exemption from immunization requirements removed by LD 798 in 2019.

Since it was first introduced I believe the intentions and character of those objecting to passage of that bill were called into question. A sentiment that has grown in recent years as a result of and the expansion of heavy-handed vaccine mandates and the messaging needed to make those mandates more tolerable.

Failing to reinstate these exemptions for students creates major barriers for receiving the advantages of a public education that is recognized in the Constitution of the State of Maine as being essential to the preservation of the rights and liberties of the people. It limits the ability of medical professionals to make individual determinations regarding their patients and the ability of parents to make informed choices for the children. As we saw recently in Lewiston, it has not created stability or added to certainty – it has done the opposite.

The government in Maine and other states has long recognized the legitimacy of a statement or affidavit seeking to ensure the legitimate assertion of philosophical or religious objections. Refusing to recognize the legitimate objections of parents is not in the best interest of the public. Limiting the extracurricular opportunities of home-schooled children is not in the best interest of the public. It is wrong and it has gone on long enough.

I hope the committee can recognize the importance of this bill and finally take the corrective steps needed. Thank you for your time and consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have, but defer to the numerous experts and families who have spent years fighting for education access and to maintain bodily autonomy.

Respectfully,

Representative Billy Bob Faulkingham