

April 3, 2023

Dear Honorable Members of the Joint Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs,

My name is Anne Feeley and I am from Belfast and I am opposed to LD 51, an Act to Restore Religious and Philosophical Exemptions to Immunization Requirements.

My objection is based on my personal experience with communicable diseases that are now preventable by vaccine. My father was the first licensed pediatrician in the State of New Jersey. He became dedicated to eradicating the scourge of his time called polio. His very healthy brother, John, contracted polio when he was in high school. He lived but his health was compromised for the rest of his life. I remember his struggle to climb stairs, walk a short distance, or even just to stand up. He wore heavy, cumbersome braces and used crutches and canes to move about. This was before immunization was possible. John would have loved to have had the vaccine. My father, John's little brother, would have loved to have had this vaccine so he could have prevented John's devastating disease.

John had a granddaughter, MaryBeth. A sweet, loving child who unfortunately was born with Cerebral Palsy causing deafness, cognitive impairment, and the same horrific mobility issues as her grandfather. John's daughter contracted measles during her 1st trimester of pregnancy causing MaryBeth's disabilities. She too would have loved to have the vaccine to prevent her illness but just like her grandfather, the vaccines had not yet been developed.

We have been given the gift of vaccines which are proven to be safe and effective to protect against these preventable diseases. As a community responsible for the safety of all, why would we not use it?