

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and distinguished members of the committee, I am asking you today to vote ought to pass on LD 51. My name is Dr. Ella Ressler. I'm a George Mitchell scholar from the Maine School of Science and Mathematics, I hold two bachelor's degrees: one in human biology and the other in sociology. I also received my Doctorate and love practicing healthcare here in my hometown of Jay, Maine. I share this to show that I am a proud multi-generational Mainer who loves science but not science fiction. I'm one of the very few Mainers who was born and raised here, left for higher education, and then returned. In fact, after practicing in the Portland area for 6 years I sold my practice and moved back to my rural hometown. A small town with less than 5,000 people—I saw the need for quality healthcare providers, and I stepped up. Today I am asking all of you to step up for education equality for all. I stand here today for myself, my daughter, and my patients. I am committed to the future of Maine. LD51 allows my family to receive the same education and daycare options that everyone else does.

I am philosophically opposed to the varicella (chickenpox) vaccine. This philosophy is rooted in science of my own educational and professional background. According to Merriam-Webster dictionary, philosophy is *"the study of the basic ideas about knowledge, truth, right and wrong, religion, and the nature and meaning of life."* The United Kingdom does not require varicella vaccines for school attendance. In fact, they are not encouraged unless a child or adult has close contact with someone who has chickenpox or shingles. Directly from the UK government website it reads: *"There's a worry that introducing chickenpox vaccination for all children could increase the risk of chickenpox and shingles in adults."*

Here lies a perfect example of differing medical theories or philosophies. The way the UK and America's CDC have studied the varicella vaccine differ. Any child from the UK who is following UK healthcare guidance—is not fully vaccinated in Maine. With passing LD 51, these philosophical differences are honored. LD 51 does not remove vaccine requirements but allows for ideal informed consent through the acknowledgment of scientifically sound philosophical exemptions.

I am also philosophically opposed to my four-month-old daughter receiving three doses of the HiB vaccine or receiving the PCV, Heb A or Heb B vaccines. These are all required for my daughter to attend daycare in Maine but not required for her to attend Kindergarten. As a working mom I have been forced to limit my patient hours (when we are already short staffed for healthcare workers). My daughter is not currently eligible to attend daycare in the state of Maine. A philosophical exemption allows me to keep informed consent and bodily autonomy for my daughter. It also allows me to serve more Maine people as my childcare options would then increase. It does not require that daycares must accept philosophical exemptions should they wish to continue with these 4 vaccine requirements. Any great doctor understands that keeping a patient active in their healthcare decisions allows for better patient outcomes and is THE only way to uphold informed consent. I ask you to vote ought to pass on LD 51.