

Good morning, Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and esteemed members of the Committee of Education and Cultural Affairs,

I am asking you today to "vote ought to pass" on LD51

My name is Thia Renae Embers and I live in the town of Lamoine.

When my brother David Eugene was 6 months old he died of a vaccine injury. He was a healthy, cheerful infant when my mother took him to the doctor to receive a vaccination. He fussed a little after the shot, then when he was in the car on the way home he started to cry in earnest. At home my mother did everything she could think of to console David. Instead of calming down his cries became high pitched screams. My Mom was frantic with worry, she didn't know what was happening. No one had told her that the vaccine could cause this type of reaction. She didn't know that her baby's brain was swelling and causing him excruciating pain. My parents put baby David in his crib to let him cry it out. His cries became whimpers and then he became quiet. Thinking that he had fallen asleep, my parents checked on him. They were horrified to find that 8 hours after receiving the vaccine my brother was dead from vaccine induced encephalitis.

When my son was born I was concerned that my genetic heritage may make him susceptible to vaccine injury. While I was pregnant I read every book available on childhood vaccines. I weighed the risk that each disease posed against the possibility that my baby may have a bad reaction and I made an informed decision not to vaccinate. Later my son was diagnosed with a chronic illness, and a genetic mutation that makes it difficult for him to process toxins. When he entered school I used both the philosophical exemption and the religious exemptions. When LD798 passed I was told not to worry, with his family history, genetic make up and chronic illness, I would be able to find a medical exemption for him so that he could continue to attend school. Well, I am here to tell you that the State of Maine has made it impossible to get a medical exemption. In the privacy of their office, doctors have recommended that I not vaccinate my son because of his health history, but they are unwilling to risk writing an exemption for fear of reprisal from the state medical board. It seems that the State does not care about the health of my son, or his education. It seems that The State does not care about doctors making the best decisions for their patients.

I urge you to right this wrong, I urge you to restore our rights as free citizens to make informed decisions about pharmaceutical drugs, without coercion by the State. End medical segregation and discrimination in Maine now. Vote Ought to pass.