

Good Morning Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and esteemed committee members.

My name is Diana Lane and I am here today to encourage you to support LD51. I and my husband are generational Mainers. My husband is a lobsterman. And I am a second generation homeschool mother to our two children. My experience as a homeschool student growing up was great. I've always said that I had the best of both worlds because I was able to participate in public school music, drama and foreign language classes. I always thought when the time came that I would follow a similar path for my own children. But those sorts of community building educational opportunities that I benefited from will be denied to my children because of their vaccination class.

I explained to my 7yr old for the first time the other day the basics of what LD798 means for our family and that she does not have equal access to education. "Will I be able to go to college Mama?" she asked in alarm. "Yes!" I affirmed. "But not here in Maine." How sad that our own home state offers so little to her. How foolish that we are driving our own out of state; some of our best and brightest.

Please consider that the idea of bolstering vaccination rates by threatening the removal of access to childcare, education, and employment is not an ethical proposal. It flies in the face of foundational medical ethics, eradicating the ability for true, principled informed consent by introducing the element of coercion. The ethical dilemma created by adopting this law should be taken seriously and remedied quickly.

LD798 segregates our communities into those who have access to what their taxes fund, and those who do not. This law means that our state's children are missing out on the opportunity of learning with and from each other. This law leaves vulnerable families in difficult situations with little support. This law denies the reality of vaccine harm and leaves behind the many families who live with this reality. This law oppresses those whose religion compels them to make vaccine choices different than that of the majority. This law seeks to colonize those whose lifestyle and heritage is to cultivate health outside the narrow course of allopathic Western medicine. I could go on...

As a LD798 homeschooler, I live with the reality that someday I may find myself needing resources and help, and yet my state will offer me no help. It is an injustice that many families, my own included, have to choose between following the advice of our trusted family doctor and our access to education due to the great difficulty in obtaining medical exemptions. Philosophical and religious exemptions were a critical resource to families like mine and we deserve to get access to them back.

At the end of the day, all I can see is that LD798 weakens and divides our state and our ability to function as a healthy society - all for the sake of a couple more percentage points on the state's vaccine report card and more money in big Pharma's pocket. Has it been worth it?

Today we are now faced with a rare opportunity to right a terrible wrong. Please consider the vast injustices that LD798 has created and put your support behind LD51. Thank you for your time.