

Good Afternoon Chairmen Rafferty and Brennan and Committee Members,

My name is Donna Dodge.

As a Registered Dietitian at a local health clinic, I lost my job because I was denied the freedom to file a religious or philosophical exemption. The facility I left has yet to fill my position; that was a year-and-a-half ago.

My daughter was forced to leave Maine to attend college. She will never return, she will never raise a family here. The lack of medical freedom in Maine makes that an impossibility. I know of two other families who left Maine upon the passage of LD 798.

I went to the Maine Connections Academy website to sign them up for remote school. The site had an entire section dedicated to the adherence to Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 dealing with anti-discrimination. Listed were the numerous categories of students it would never deny an education. It would never discriminate based on color, ethnicity, religion, physical or mental disability, age, marital status, gender identity, sexual orientation, or immigration status. The one group they do discriminate against, the one group they do deny an education? The unvaccinated child. My boys were denied access to online public education through a program that would have been conducted in our home at our kitchen table.

My family doesn't live in a bubble, we go to the supermarket, the movies, the beach, the library, we shop at the mall, we eat at restaurants, etc. My sons go to their friends' houses, sleepovers, camping trips, etc. We can do anything within the towns and state we live in. Yet I am denied access to employment and my children are denied access to an education.

This committee, when passing LD 798 four years ago, most likely felt that requiring multiple vaccinations for multiple illnesses would make Maine a safer place to live.

### **Incidence of Pertussis\***

<b>Year</b>	<b>Vaccinated</b>
2018	84%
2019	95%
2020	90%
2021	100%

**Measles\*\* from 2017 – 2021,  
a total of 3 cases in Maine  
2 were fully vaccinated**

Meningitis: Going back as far as 2011 there have been 16 cases of meningitis in Maine of the type that the meningococcal vaccine targets.

This equates to 1.45 cases per year.  $1.45 / 1.4 \text{ million population} = 0.000001\%$  risk of meningitis.

Based on the number of injuries, hospitalizations and deaths from the meningococcal vaccine reported to Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS)\*\*\*, my children have at least a 1,000x greater risk of being injured by the vaccine than they are to contract meningitis.

Where there is risk, there must always be choice.

In closing,

If the goal is to prevent illnesses or reduce the risk of injury to our children, vaccine mandates have been an abject failure. The numbers clearly reveal this.

But if the goal is to:

- Force individuals and families to leave Maine,
- Worsen the shortage of healthcare workers,
- Interfere with a parent and their child's medical decisions,

the current strategy has been a tremendous success.

But we can fix this, we can reverse this ominous trend.

In closing....

In the spring of 2019, Democrats in this Committee and the legislature voted in favor of removing the ability to file vaccine exemptions. But isn't this the party that's supposed to stand up for children, for women, supposed to stand up for freedom of choice. My body, my choice. Right? Please stand up for my rights to go back to work and please stand up for the rights of my family to get an education here in Maine.

Please support LD 51 / LD 1098.

Thank you.

Donna Dodge  
Denmark

\*<https://www.maine.gov/dbhs/mecdc>

\*\* *Source: Maine CDC Division of Disease Surveillance*

\*\*\* *U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program Data—July 1, 2019. National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program. July 1, 2019*