

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

My name is Beth Hallowell and I am a registered nurse, advocate, mother, partner, daughter and respected member of our community. I am here in support of LD 51 as well as LD 1098, LD869, LD 1148, LD 1209 & LD 1228. It is really our duty to pass. Because if we don't stand for this, for the simple governance over our own bodies then what do we stand for at all?

I have been a nurse for 15 years. I've taught clinicals for universities in Maine. I have precepted/oriented many new nurses, I was a charge nurse. I have been trusted my entire career with the lives of women and their children. I have always been respected and I have always been one of the best. And I'm not someone who would ever have said that before but now I need to stand up for myself because no one will stand up for me. This state lost so many assets when they passed this legislation. This state is hurting and the entire healthcare system is a tragedy. The hospital that I dedicated my entire nursing career to is falling apart. They are staffed by ~~travel~~ travel nurses and spend millions of dollars on those contracts. And nothing is better; it's only worse. And I can literally drive across the border to another state and not be a threat. I'm not dangerous in New Hampshire. I'm not dangerous in almost any other state in this country. I have never been infected with Covid nor have I ever given anyone Covid and yet here I am unvaccinated and seen as a dangerous person. Many of my old coworkers have been vaccinated and had Covid multiple times in the last three years and they've all been working. In some hospitals in Maine they were allowed to return to work while POSITIVE for covid if asymptomatic. So who is the dangerous one? Why did I get singled out? Why did any of us who didn't want an experimental medication need to be singled out? Why as a healthcare provider am I being denied the same rights that I give to my patients every day, to make decisions for themselves and for their children.

Medical exemptions are a unicorn. They don't exist and even when they do exist the amount of hoops you have to jump through to even prove that you deserve one are atrocious. And because of the nature of everything that's happened over the last couple of years no physician is willing to take on any liability related to medical exemptions. It is become completely political and 0% about health, wellness, bodily autonomy, and informed consent. Find me physicians that will write medical exemptions willingly without hesitation when they are warranted and I will find you that unicorn.

As an example of how ridiculous this whole system is in relation to school children - if a parent simply declines the Hepatitis B vaccine series, their kid is not allowed to attend school. A vaccine to prevent a disease spread by illicit drug use with dirty needles or unprotected sexual contact....Please tell me why my 7 and 9 year old children need to have that vaccine by the age of 5? Because that is what is being demanded in this state.

I would like any of you that are considering voting ought not to pass to look me in the eye today and tell me that I don't deserve to work here. That I don't deserve to be a nurse, that I don't deserve to provide for my family, that I don't deserve to give back to my state, that my kids don't deserve to go to school here, that my kids are lepers, and dangerous. I want you to tell me that because that's what you're saying if you don't pass this bill. It's just black and white. And if you can sit there and feel like you can look me in the face in person and tell me that I don't deserve any of those things then you should be ashamed. Because I deserve more than anyone to be able to do what I've done for the past 14 years. I've never been dangerous, I've never ^{hurt} heard a patient, I've never put anyone at risk. But now I'm told that I don't deserve to be here. So forget political division, forget party lines, forget the implications of what it might mean when you vote a certain way and just be a human. And treat me like I am worthy and I am a person who deserves to be able to control my body and make medical decisions for myself. And just vote based on that alone. It doesn't matter what Side of the aisle you sit on or what political beliefs you have or what people might say on the Internet behind a screen. It's about freedom and educated decisions for yourself. Where will you draw the line?

"First they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out—because I was not a socialist.
Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out—because I was not a trade unionist.
Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out—because I was not a Jew.
Then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak for me."

So maybe you're sitting there thinking well it doesn't affect me because I think everyone should be vaccinated. I don't think anyone deserves an exemption. But what about when they come for you for something that you don't agree with but you've never stood up before? Do you really think that there will be anyone there left to support you and stand up for you. I'm asking you to stand up for me. To stand up for my kids. To stand up for all these people in this room who deserve to be treated like everybody else. Just stand up. I urge you to do the right thing and vote ought to pass. Thank you.