

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, I am testifying in support of LD's 51, 869, 1098, 1148, 1209, and 1228.

My name is Moriah Estes. I am a single and sole parent to a 6-Year-old, I work full time, I own my own house and vehicle, I help my ailing father with medical payments, I now homeschool, and I foot the bill for everything. Do you know what it is like trying to make ends meet in a 3-day work week because that's all you have childcare for? Do you know what access to daycare or school could have done for us? I can't just vaccinate my son and send him to school. When I was 19, I got the first Gardasil shot and it gave me encephalitis. It was the most excruciating pain in my head I have ever felt, like my brain was going to burst through my skull. I felt drunk. I stumbled my way to the kitchen, using the walls to guide me to find my phone to call my mom for help, because I lived alone in my own apartment. I could barely string two words together.

When I asked my doctor about it, this is how it went: Do you know what happened? Was it an ingredient to the vaccine? We don't know, but you are fine now. Well will it happen again? We don't know. Is there a way to find out? No. Is this what I was experiencing as a kid? I don't know. Is there a way to know if it will happen to my son, with this shot or any other? No. So, after a conversation like that, why on earth would any of you expect me to ever use that product or anything like it ever again?

Reactions happen to all sorts of things. 100% of people cannot even eat peanuts, a single ingredient food, how can we expect 100% of people to have the same "minor" reactions to a multi-ingredient man-made product? "Well, if you have a reaction just get a medical exemption" you might say. I'm 36 now. My son and I still can't get one. Where are the doctors from LD798 who said they were easy to get, anyone can get one? Why didn't they all swoop in to help us with medical exemptions? No doctor will give a medical exemption to a problem arising from a vaccine because it will end up being a perfect paper trail as to why they are not safe for everyone.

I still think about the mother who testified during 798, who wanted the exemptions gone, so her medically fragile child could attend school. My heart broke for her, I could not imagine having a child who was so ill that a sneeze from someone else could end everything. But what am I supposed to do when the only types of products anyone wants to use is something that gave me encephalitis? Why is that now the only way to judge my character as a person and my ability to fight disease? What are we supposed to do? We are having reactions, we don't have control over it, people who love us witness it, and then none of us want those things anymore, and that's the truth. It's perfectly normal to say "no" to something that can cause harm, it doesn't matter if its Zoloft, zantac, drugs, sex, toxic boyfriends, gluten, bees, or peanuts. Our bodies having terrible reactions to a product that is required for school does not mean that we should get barred from school. It means other options need to be available. If Jane takes path A to fight disease, Joe takes path B and Jim goes through the mountains it shouldn't matter what we are doing as long as we are all doing what we can. An increasing number of people throughout the world do not want these products anymore, and maybe that scares you. However, we did not make these products that people are no longer wanting. We did not choose our bodies or how they would react. However, YOU can CHOOSE to make a difference by standing for the truth. Please find a way to bring Maine together again instead of continuing to drive the stake further between your people.