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Testimony of Deborah Deatricks, MPH, in Opposition to the Following Bills:

- LD 51: An Act to Restore Religious and Philosophical Exemptions to Immunization Requirements
- LD 1098: An Act to Restore Religious and Philosophical Exemptions Regarding Immunization Requirements
- LD 1209: An Act to Reinstate the Religious and Philosophical Vaccine Exemptions for Private Schools and Virtual Public Charter Schools
- LD 1228: An Act to Prohibit Certain Higher Education Institutions from Requiring Vaccines Approved Under Emergency Use Authorization for Admission or Attendance
- LD 1148: An Act to Prohibit COVID-19 Vaccine Mandates for Students Enrolled in Public Institutions of Learning
- LD 869: An Act to Protect Education Access by Prohibiting a Mandate for Schoolchildren for a COVID-19 Vaccine or a Vaccine Under Emergency Use Authorization

Good day, Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs. My name is Deborah Deatricks and I'm a resident of Cumberland. I'm here to testify in opposition to the bills being proposed today, and will speak specifically to my opposition to LD 51.

I am a public health professional with nearly 40 years of experience, recently retired from two decades as the Senior Vice President for Community Health Improvement for the MaineHealth system and currently a consultant on maternal and child health issues. I'm a founding member and former President of the Maine Public Health Association, a founding leader of Maine Families for Vaccines, an appointed member of the Maine Vaccine Board since its inception, and the mother of a 25 year-old son who has been fully vaccinated since he was born.

I dedicated my career to ensuring that Maine's children are protected from harm, and I have advocated over many years for programs and policies on oral health, asthma, lead, tobacco, preventing child abuse and adverse childhood experiences, and other priority issues that impact Maine children and families. For me, the most important of all of these are vaccine preventable diseases. This is for two reasons: because this is truly a matter of life or death, and because we can make such a difference by enacting simple, commonsense policies that protect countless lives.

I was part of the small volunteer team of parents who saw Maine's childhood vaccine law through its referendum and into enactment. This law has already helped to protect children and keep schools safer from communicable diseases like measles, mumps, pertussis, and diphtheria. In turn, vulnerable immunosuppressed children, adults, and those over 65 (like me) are better protected. Mainers understood how important it is to protect this cornerstone of public health when we voted overwhelmingly – by a 73% margin, to keep our vaccine law. Now, we will not go backwards and opt out of our duty to protect those too young to protect themselves.

We are counting on you, as policymakers, to do the right thing and vote "ought not to pass" on each of these bills. I'd be happy to answer any questions you might have. Thank you for your consideration.

Deborah Deatricks