

Cumberland Fire Department

Town of Cumberland
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Daniel R. Small
Chief of Department

Testimony of Fire Chief Daniel R. Small

In Support of Legislative Document #601

An Act to Reduce the Shortage of Municipal Emergency Medical Services Personnel by
Removing Certain Vaccination Requirements

Sponsored by Representative Steve Moriarty

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services: My name is Daniel Small and I am the Fire Chief for the Town of Cumberland and I am here to testify in support of LD 601.

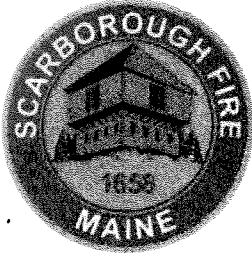
In the fall of 2006, I received a flu shot. Shortly after I became sick with the flu in which I vomited for 36 hours, had a fever, and for 7 days I was bedridden because of major vertigo. A few weeks later my left leg became stiff to the point where I could not bend my knee. Thinking it was a problem with my back, I went to my family physician. He quickly informed me that it was not a muscular problem rather it was a neurological problem. He immediately scheduled an appointment at Maine Medical Center with a neurologist for that afternoon. Over the next few days I underwent tests including 2 MRI's and a spinal tap. He decided to treat me with multiple high doses of steroids which helped minimize my leg stiffness over time. One month later, I began having auras in which I would sweat and lose my train of thought momentarily. Because my neurologist was now frustrated that he could not determine what was happening, he recommended that I see a different doctor. I ended up switching neurologists, which meant more MRIs and tests to try to figure out what was going on with my body. I was put on anti-seizure medication as well as medication for possible Multiple Sclerosis. After another MRI was conducted a spot was now seen on my brain. I was referred to a neurosurgeon at the Yale-New Haven Hospital in Connecticut. I spent one week at Yale receiving tests and yet again 4 additional MRIs. At the end of that evaluation, it was decided that I would have a brain biopsy to figure out what was still causing my complications. ***I was tested by neurologists in Maine and at Yale, and nothing - other than the flu shot - could be identified by the doctors as to what initiated my health complications.***

After my brain surgery, tests were completed and it was decided that I did not need to continue with anti-seizure or Multiple Sclerosis medications. However, in the summer of 2009 I suffered 5 seizures over a 5-month period. Since then, I have resumed taking anti-seizure medications which my neurologist has told me I will likely be doing for the rest of my life.

At the March Metro Chiefs meeting the flu shot mandate was discussed and we agreed that this will have an even higher negative impact to staffing than what was caused by the COVID vaccination requirement. The Scarborough Fire Department performed a survey and 38% of their full-time staff advised that they will refuse to receive the vaccination.

Speaking for the Cumberland Fire Department we will likely have an even higher percentage of vaccination refusals because people have seen firsthand what has happened to me.

We are losing EMS personnel in this State and our ability to provide medical care is failing. The COVID and flu shot requirements must be removed.



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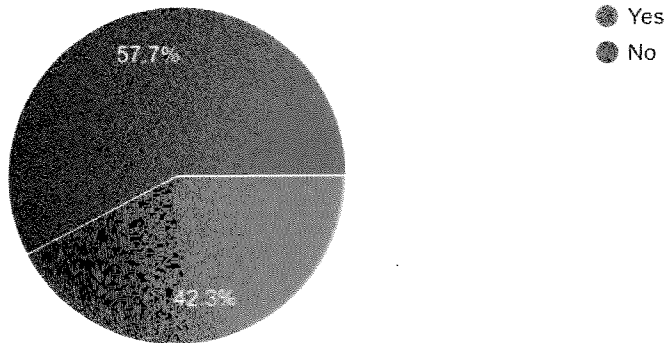
John S. Brennan, Deputy Fire Chief

March 21, 2023

SCARBOROUGH FIRE DEPARTMENT FULL-TIME STAFF FLU SHOT SURVEY. (26 OF 32 FT EMPLOYEES RESPONDED.)

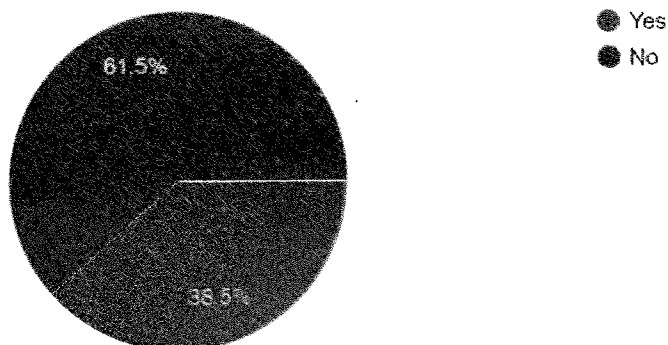
When the Flu vaccine is mandated in November, would you seek an exemption?

26 responses



When the Flu vaccine is mandated in November, would you refuse?

26 responses



The Maine Fire Chiefs Association has reviewed 40 LD's for the 131st Legislature's 1st session of public hearings but I have narrowed that list to 14 that I believe identify why we are struggling to sustain our present staffing levels. These include the vaccination mandate which will negatively impact our ability to provide emergency medical care that is provided in the field by our EMS crews.

LD 172

An Act to Allow Health Care Workers to Return to Work by Reinstating Exemptions from Immunization Requirements

Committee: Health & Human Services

LD 244

An Act to Allow Health Care Workers to Return to Work by Reinstating Exemptions from Immunization Requirements

Committee: Criminal Justice & Public Safety

LD 326

An Act to Improve Recruitment and Retention of First Responders

Committee: Criminal Justice & Public Safety

LD 444

An Act to Designate First Responders and Other Public Safety Professionals as a Special Risk Population for the Purposes of Improving Insurance Coverage for the Effects of Trauma

Committee: Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services

LD 526

An Act to Provide Funding to Emergency Medical Services Organizations

Committee: Criminal Justice & Public Safety

LD 588

An Act to Promote Public Safety and Retain Essential First Responders by Funding the Maine Length of Service Award Program

Committee: Criminal Justice & Public Safety

LD 601

An Act to Reduce the Shortage of Municipal Emergency Medical Services Personnel by Removing Certain Vaccination Requirements

Committee: Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services

LD 648

An Act to Address Staffing Shortages in Critical Public Safety Jobs Through Economic Incentives

Committee: Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business

LD 882

An Act to Allow Nonmunicipal Emergency Medical Services Providers to Be Considered State Employees for Purposes of Certain Benefits

Committee: Labor & Housing

LD 913

An Act to Support First Responders

Committee: Criminal Justice & Public Safety

LD 919

An Act to Facilitate Employment in the Field of Emergency Medical Services

Committee: Criminal Justice & Public Safety

LD 1142

An Act to Eliminate Motor Vehicle Registration Fees for Volunteer Firefighters and Volunteer Emergency Medical Services Providers

Committee: Transportation

LD 1268

An Act to Provide for a Local Motor Vehicle Excise Tax Exemption for Qualifying Volunteer Firefighters and Emergency Medical Services Persons

Committee: Taxation

LD 1409

An Act to Require Reimbursement When a Municipality Hires First Responders Whose Training Costs Were Incurred by Another Municipality

Committee: State & Local Government