

Good morning Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and members of the Committee on Health and Human Services. My name is Brandie Rubin and I am a Registered Nurse from Scarborough, Maine. I am testifying today to strongly oppose LD 59, LD 172, LD 601, LD 1382, LD 1547, and LD 1598. This statement is my own and I am not representing any organization.

If the last 3 years have taught us anything, it is to be prepared for the unexpected. Over the past several decades, those who have dedicated their lives to science, have worked diligently to find cures and develop preventatives to keep our communities alive and as healthy as possible. These scientists have paved the way for the vaccines and medications that we use today and tomorrow, and we will continue to develop treatments and preventions for some of the most deadly infectious diseases. Deadly respiratory illnesses are not ever going to go away. These Bills seek only to limit those possibilities of discovery and will build a major roadblock to prevent the development of life saving vaccines against the next deadly respiratory illness. We can't predict the future, and therefore we should not attempt to prevent the amazing work that our scientists do to protect our communities, our children, our families, and those who care for us when we need them the most.

LD 59, An Act to Prohibit Inclusion of the Covid-19 vaccine in the universal childhood immunization program. The Covid-19 vaccine is not listed on the required immunization list for school entry. The vaccines on that list are; Diphtheria, Measles, Meningococcal meningitis, Mumps, Pertussis, Polio, Tetanus, Rubella, and Varicella. You will notice that this list does not include every vaccine available. It does not include HPV or Influenza, and it does not include Covid-19. The research on the Covid-19 vaccine is ongoing. In fact, as a Nurse, I just recently responded to my latest V-Safe Check In. I have been part of this program to track adverse events since I got my first dose of the Covid-19 vaccine in December 2020. Data collection is ongoing, and while I am not aware of any plans to require the Covid-19 vaccine for children at this time, to pass legislation for prevention of future requirements, before accepting all the data coming from the researchers, just seems irresponsible. The addition of vaccines to the childhood requirements still requires them to go through the rulemaking process and we need to let that process continue.

LD 172, An Act to Allow Health Care Workers to Return to Work by Reinstating Exemptions from Immunization Requirements, is again, going against the wish of Maine Voters when they voted on March 3, 2020 to remove the philosophical and religious exemptions for healthcare workers. Vaccine requirements are not new to healthcare workers. I received the Hepatitis B vaccine series as a healthcare worker long before it was recommended for the general public, and school children. We have an obligation to protect our patients from vaccine preventable illnesses, but we also have an obligation to protect our workforce and prevent the spread of communicable illnesses among ourselves. The vast majority of healthcare worker governing bodies, such as the American Medical Association, American Academy of Pediatrics, American College of Physicians, the American Nurses Association, and more, overwhelmingly support the use of vaccines, because we know they are safe and they are effective. We already know that there are no organized religions that prohibit vaccination when they are for the common good. Healthcare workers have seen the effects of these illnesses on people, we have seen people die, there

should be no "personal philosophy" against vaccination among healthcare workers. Medical exemptions, as always, remain in place and continue to be between the person and their physician, NP and/or PA.

LD 601, An Act to Reduce the Shortage of Municipal Emergency Medical Services Personnel by Removing Certain Vaccination Requirements. I'll be honest, the purpose of this bill caused me to pause. In the title, it says: "Certain vaccination requirements" but if you go into the body of the bill, it clearly states, "Covid-19 vaccinations and Influenza." Emergency Medical Services Personnel are, in fact, healthcare workers, and play a critical role in our healthcare delivery system. As a former Emergency Medical Services worker myself, I know that these healthcare team members can never be 100% sure of what they will find when they arrive on scene. Arguably, these workers deserve the most protection in the field that we have available. The patients and family members, who are usually having the worst day of their lives when these team members arrive on scene, have the right to feel safe and be assured these workers aren't bringing vaccine preventable illness into their homes. Our communities need to know that trained personnel will come to them when they are called. Yes, we have a shortage of EMS workers in this state. Yes, it is a huge problem and I have seen first hand the repercussions from co-workers and friends who have been unable to get the transport they need when they need it. This bill implies that the shortage of municipal EMS services is due to the vaccine requirements. There is a lot of misinformation circulating everywhere. It is easy to hear some of this misinformation and start to question, especially without any formal education in the disease processes and how to discern the difference between credible and not credible research. I have heard stories from friends and family of EMS workers who have also peddled vaccine misinformation. During the hearing to add the Covid-19 vaccine to EMS workers in the Fall of 2021, the Fire Chief in my own town quoted vaccine misinformation. To say I was appalled would be an understatement. EMS workers don't have the years of science and education that Doctors, Nurses, and other healthcare team members that require a college degree do, and therefore lack the numerous classes in physiology, pharmacology, pathophysiology classes. However, they are healthcare workers and deserve to have the same requirements that all healthcare workers have. To allow these respected healthcare team members to decide which vaccines they don't want to take, without being able to provide credible reasons as to why not, creates a dangerous precedent and is actually allowing these team members to work beyond their scope of practice. Additionally, while the peddling of misinformation among the profession exists, to ignore the actual reasons why so many have left the profession, such as the low pay, unsafe working environments, and violence toward these workers, is a disservice to these valued health care team members.

LD 1382, LD 1547, LD 1598

Any legislation that seeks to prevent ANY future vaccine, ones that we cannot even begin to imagine at this time, from being utilized could be a dangerous decision that could put thousands, or hundreds of thousands, of lives at risk. Furthermore, the addition, or deletion, or any vaccine from requirements should be left for the rulemaking process, and addressed at the time.

So, please vote Ought Not to Pass on all bills presented today. Thank you.