

Courtney Ampezzan
North Yarmouth
April 24, 2023

Regarding LD 59, LD 172, LD 601, LD 1382, LD 1547, & LD 1598.

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and members of the Committee on Health and Human Services: My name is Courtney Ampezzan, and I am a resident of North Yarmouth. I am here as an extremely vulnerable and concerned citizen. My time to speak is limited, so I will not address each bill, but please note my opposition to all 6 of these bills -LD 59, LD 172, LD 601, LD 1382, LD 1547, & LD 1598.

Some of you might remember me from my previous testimonies before other committees. I have an ultra-rare primary immunodeficiency which means I am a very high-risk patient that is incredibly vulnerable to severe illness and infections. In fact, after testifying here at the state house on April third, I ended up at the doctor's where I had to be put on additional medications and was in bed for a week due to the stress on my immune system. Yet I am back here today because it is critical that this committee takes into consideration the negative and potentially deadly consequences these bills could have on other patients like me.

LD 172 seeks to reinstate the religious and philosophical exemption for healthcare workers. Reinstating these exceptions would have direct and severe consequences for the most vulnerable people in our community. Speaking as a patient, when I go to the doctor, the emergency room, or when I'm admitted to the hospital, I am already extremely anxious about my health. I don't need the additional stress on my mental and physical well-being by worrying about the vaccination status of my care team. My illness is going to kill me, I don't need an unvaccinated employee doing it for me sooner by giving me COVID. If I am being completely honest, I struggle with the thought of why a healthcare worker would even want an exemption to a vaccine that could not only protect themselves but also their patients and their community. I don't understand why someone would even be working in healthcare if they didn't trust the science behind vaccines. Vaccines are safe, effective, and necessary for good public health. Furthermore, the Supreme Court has allowed Maine's immunization requirements for healthcare workers to remain in effect, rejecting claims that workers should be allowed religious exemptions.

Vaccines, and the protection they provide through herd immunity, are significant reasons as to how and why I am here today. Tomorrow isn't promised. I am not sure how much longer I have before my illness consumes me, but I do know until I take my final breath I will continue to advocate for the health and safety of my community. So today, I am here using my voice to respectfully appeal to the Committee to vote "ought not to pass" on LD 59, LD 172, LD 601, LD 1382, LD 1547, & LD 1598.

Thank you for your time this morning and for your continued commitment to affording all Mainers equitable access to a safe and healthy community.