

05 FEB 2025

**Testimony in Favor of LD93: *"An Act to Reduce Cost and Increase Access to Disease Prevention by Expanding the Universal Childhood Immunization Program to Include Adults"***

Good afternoon, Senator Ingwerson, Representative Meyer, and esteemed members of the Health and Human Services Committee:

My name is Gary Connor, I live in Kennebunk, and I speak today in support of LD93.

I am presently the Chairperson of the Maine Vaccine Board, and it is important to note that my testimony today is mine alone and does not represent a voted position of the Maine Vaccine Board. From 2006 to 2010, I proudly served the constituents of Maine House District 140 and previously sat on this committee and subsequently Appropriations and Financial Affairs.

I was the lead sponsor in the 124<sup>th</sup> legislature of LD1408 "An Act To Establish the Universal Childhood Immunization Program" which was signed into law by Governor Baldacci in 2010. In 2020, the board commissioned an independent impact analysis which showed great cost savings resulting from this program. In fact, the data from that report (which has been shared previously with this committee) indicated approximate savings of \$4 million annually for our insurance carriers.

The effort to create a public-private partnership through LD1408 took many years and several key members from that coalition remain deeply involved with the Maine Vaccine Board today. You will likely hear testimony from some of those individuals, some in favor, some possibly opposed, and some "neither for nor against", but I believe in all instances those testifying understand that what presently exists for children in Maine is also possible for our adult population with similar **financial savings and improved care efficiencies**.

During the original debate, I made a strong argument that the financial barriers to immunization must be removed, that a system that places extra burdens on our doctors and hospitals, and care that isn't the right dose, at the right time, for the right patient, is a system needing improvement. Having immediate access to immunization at decreased cost to insurers and medical teams and that decreases patient burden is a win-win for our entire state.

As has been stated in prior testimony, this bill does not introduce any new mandates for vaccination, it does not extend the powers of the Maine Vaccine Board, nor does the bill give the state opportunity to decide what adults should or should not do- those debates are for another day. LD93 is about purchasing power and how we can provide the best possible access to healthcare.

As a final point, there are some governance items within the current statute that could likely use revision, these include harmonizing the method of meeting to meet today's standards, assuring that the Board composition provides for expertise in both children and adults, assuring that term lengths for board members are equitable while still allowing for staggered terms.

I am encouraged to see that the work session planned for tomorrow has now been postponed which will allow Representative Zager and the Department staff the opportunity to refine the proposed bill's language and assure that potential concerns of our stakeholders are adequately addressed.

Thank you for your time and for your service to the Great State of Maine.

I am happy to attempt to answer any questions about my testimony or the status of the Maine Vaccine Board.