

Testimony of Caitlin Gilmet Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services
Wednesday, February 5, 2025

LD 93 – An Act to Reduce Cost and Increase Access to Disease Prevention by Expanding the Universal Childhood Immunization Program to Include Adults

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services:

My name is Caitlin Gilmet, and I serve as the Director of Maine Families for Vaccines, a coalition of parents, healthcare advocates, and public health professionals committed to ensuring access to life-saving immunizations for all Mainers. I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony on LD 93, which seeks to expand Maine's Universal Childhood Immunization Program to include adults.

Maine's existing Universal Childhood Immunization Program has been a national model for ensuring broad vaccine access while lowering costs for families, providers, and insurers. This program has supported high childhood vaccination rates, with 95% of school-age children receiving required immunizations as of August 2024. LD 93 presents an opportunity to build on this strong foundation and extend similar benefits to adult populations, where coverage gaps remain a challenge.

As we consider this expansion, it's important to acknowledge that the federal landscape for vaccine programs is changing. With potential shifts in vaccine funding, supply chains, and policy frameworks, states must be proactive in ensuring that immunization programs remain strong, sustainable, and adaptable to future challenges.

Providers are the most trusted voices in vaccine education, and their role in immunization efforts is critical. Any system expansion must ensure that healthcare providers are adequately supported, empowered, and fairly reimbursed for both vaccine administration and patient counseling. The ability to provide clear, evidence-based guidance to patients is essential for maintaining high immunization rates and public trust in vaccines.

Additionally, broad access and choice must be preserved within the program. A strong universal purchase model should maintain a full range of ACIP-recommended vaccines without limiting choice. Vaccine access is not just about supply; it's about ensuring that patients and providers have options that meet medical, logistical, and personal needs. Other states with Universal Purchase programs have faced challenges when access to certain formulations was restricted, which can contribute to vaccine hesitancy and make it more challenging for small practices to provide immunizations in a medical home.

Maine Families for Vaccines supports expanding vaccine access, strengthening vaccine policy, and ensuring equity in immunization programs. This bill presents an opportunity to bolster our state's immunization infrastructure and better protect Mainers of all ages.

We encourage this committee to advance LD 93 with a focus on preserving access, empowering providers, and ensuring the program remains responsive to the needs of Maine communities. Thank you for your time and consideration.

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