



**Testimony in OPPOSITION to
LD 174: "An Act to Restore Religious Exemptions to Immunization Requirements"
and
LD 727: "An Act to Repeal Certain Immunization Requirements for Schools"**

**Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs
April 7, 2025**

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and Honorable Members of the Committee,

I am Caroline Zimmerman, Chair of the Maine Immunization Coalition (MIC). The MIC is a network of associations, health care systems, and providers working to protect Maine people across their lifespan against vaccine-preventable diseases by increasing immunization rates through information sharing and collaboration. Our coalition includes: Maine Chapter-American Academy of Pediatrics, MaineHealth, Maine Primary Care Association, Maine Public Health Association, Northern Light Health, Maine Families for Vaccines, Maine Community Action Partnership, Maine Medical Association, and Maine Osteopathic Association.

The MIC stands in opposition to both LD 174: "An Act to Restore Religious Exemptions to Immunization Requirements," which seeks to reinstate non-medical vaccine exemptions into school vaccination requirements; and LD 727: "An Act to Repeal Certain Immunization Requirements for Schools," which seeks to repeal immunization requirements for schools.

Maine people voted on both of these issues in 2019, with a resounding 72.6% of voters in support of the current law, which includes an allowance for medical exemptions, taking into account the needs of students who cannot be vaccinated due to a medical condition. Any allowance for non-medical exemptions would be detrimental to the overall effectiveness of Maine's vaccine requirements.

The current law has enabled Maine to achieve high vaccination rates. For example, our school vaccination rates are high enough to provide community immunity against measles. In the 2023-2024 Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention School Assessment report, an impressive 97.4% of Kindergarteners were vaccinated against measles; which is higher than the minimum threshold needed for community immunity to measles (95%). As measles spreads in other parts of the country, we are seeing the benefits of our current law in keeping our communities safe and healthy.

States with broad vaccine exemptions have seen dangerous outbreaks of vaccine preventable disease. These outbreaks cost lives, waste money, lower productivity, and put an enormous strain on our healthcare systems and public health infrastructure. We simply cannot afford additional exemptions to our existing vaccine requirements.

Vaccine preventable diseases are just that: preventable. Preventing disease before children and adults are sick, incapacitated or die prematurely; before schools and other public spaces need to be closed for extended periods, and before the economy is impacted. We have an obligation to care for and protect our children, and that includes a reasonable, science-based vaccination schedule.

Childhood immunizations have been proven safe and effective time and time again. We need to stand up for science, public health, and Maine kids and work to protect our current immunization requirements, which have been resoundingly supported by Maine voters. We need to be champions for vaccine education and access, and not weaken laws that keep people in Maine safe.

To protect public health and safety, and the most vulnerable in our state, we respectfully request the committee to vote 'Ought NOT to pass' on LD 174 and LD 727. Please help us keep Maine's schools and communities safe from vaccine preventable diseases.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Caroline Zimmerman
Chair, Maine Immunization Coalition