

Courtney Ampezzan  
North Yarmouth  
April 7, 2024

Regarding LD174/ LD722

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs,

My name is Courtney Ampezzan, and I live in North Yarmouth. I am here today, at significant personal risk, to express my opposition to LD 174 and LD 727.

Some of you might remember me from my previous testimonies, but please let me remind you of my story. I have an ultra-rare primary immunodeficiency, and I am unable to receive most vaccines, which leaves me extraordinarily susceptible to illness and disease. I depend entirely on those around me to be vaccinated to help protect me and keep me safe from vaccine-preventable diseases. Since my last testimony, I have been diagnosed with stage three lymphoma. I started palliative care treatments last week, but I was determined to be here today because I made a promise last time I was here that until I take my final breath, I will continue to advocate for the health and safety of my community.

Maine's current law is backed by science and public health best practices. As it stands now, the law promotes safety for our children and our entire community. Reinstating non-medical exemptions would be an affront to public health, science, and the majority of Mainers who voted to remove these exemptions.

LD 174 would reinstate non-medical (religious) exemptions, and LD 727 goes even further, seeking to remove all vaccine requirements. Reinstating religious exemptions and/or eliminating the vaccine requirement would put the entire community at risk for unnecessary and potentially deadly outbreaks of preventable diseases. This would also have direct and severe consequences for the most vulnerable people in our community.

Vaccine-preventable illnesses are on the rise all around us, and I am terrified. There is absolutely no good reason why I should be worried about contracting measles in 2025; yet, here we are. Measles is already in several states, and it is only a matter of time before it is here in Maine, so please don't make us any more vulnerable than we already are.

I implore you to consider how any amendments or rollbacks of this law will grievously affect vulnerable people like me. I know if I contract the measles, I probably won't survive. I am begging you not to pass LD 174 and LD 727. Please, help keep me safe so I can live long enough to let the cancer kill me.

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