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Testimony on
L.D. 174, “An Act to Restore Religious Exemptions to Immunization Requirements”

and

L.D. 727, “An Act to Repeal Certain Immunization Requirements for Schools”

Presented by
Representative Robert A. Foley
District 145

Education and Cultural Affairs Committee
Monday, April 7, 2025

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

I am State Representative Bob Foley, and I represent the citizens of District 145, which is most of the Town of Wells. I'm here today as a co-sponsor and supporter of both L.D. 174 and L.D. 727 for very personal reasons.

Last December, we gathered in the House Chamber, took our oath of office, and listened to newly-elected Speaker Fecteau discuss the upcoming session to search for collaboration, compromise, and respect for each other's journey and the experiences we all bring to this debate. He emphasized that we all come from different parts of the State, with various backgrounds, and our own unique life experiences that guide our decisions and our votes. On that same day, ladies and gentlemen, my daughter would have celebrated her 38th birthday.

My wife and I were parents of a two-month-old daughter who died 37 years ago, just 36 hours after receiving her first set of vaccinations -- three separate shots, including the DPT shot. There is not a person in these halls who will ever convince us that those shots did not play a significant and vital role in our daughter's untimely and unwarranted death.

After her death, her doctor secured the remaining quantities of the vaccine serum he had for the possibility of testing the serum for potential imperfections. Inquiries to the State Medical Examiner's Office and the State and federal CDCs regarding the testing of the serum were rebuffed as unnecessary and potentially problematic for the vaccination regiment being implemented throughout the country. We were told on several occasions that no good would ever come of pursuing the testing we were requesting, as it was time for us to move on. We were left with the saddest of diagnoses -- no known cause of death -- Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

My wife and I were not seeking vengeance or retribution in our inquiries. We were simply seeking the truth as to why our daughter died.

Over, please

In a 2019 decision by the “vaccine injury court” of the United States, in *Boatmon vs HHS*, a judge ruled:

“In this case, I have concluded, after review of the evidence, that it is more likely than not that the vaccines played a substantial causal role in the death of J.B. without the effect of which he would not have died.”

Do you even realize that the federal government has established a “vaccine injury court?” If vaccines are 100% safe, why has the federal government exempted all manufacturers of any liability, and why has the “vaccine injury court” paid out over \$4.7 billion in damages?

J.B. was originally diagnosed as a SIDS death. The same as my daughter!

Fortunately, my wife and I had two other children after our daughter’s death, both similarly healthy, but neither of them had the vaccinations so early in their lives, and neither had the DPT shot, just the DT. We did not start vaccinations until after six months, and never multiple injections at a time. As a result, my wife and I used the philosophical exemption to require our children to not be vaccinated under the same protocol. We were frightened and scared of losing another child -- a pain we could not have endured again.

We were not and are not anti-vaxxers as the media likes to portray us! We were very diligent parents. Our doctors understood our concerns and respected our philosophical feelings and emotional stress. We never put our children or anyone else’s children in danger by exercising our rights as parents. Every school they attended from pre-K all the way to college equally respected those rights and never questioned our decisions. The law, taking away these exemptions, would have prohibited my children from attending any Maine schools for lack of one set of shots.

Many foreign students from Europe, Japan, Asia, the Middle East, and beyond are not currently exposed to the same vaccination regiment required by this law. In fact, many Islamic countries prohibit vaccinations for religious reasons, yet we welcome millions of foreign students and visitors into this country and our state every year. Are we now going to require vaccination check points at our borders, or just at the doorsteps of our schools and daycares?

I do not wish a child’s death on any parent. That pain is still with me today. I only ask that you understand the wrenching decisions that my wife and I had to make because of our daughter’s untimely death. They were not easy decisions, and they were not made without a great deal of contemplation and consultation with our medical providers, as it should be.

I ask any member of this Committee, or anyone listening to this debate today who has lost a child or had one badly injured, what would you do to prevent that from happening again? The answer ladies and gentlemen is ANYTHING, anything I could possibly do!!

Unless you believe that healthy babies simply die for no reason, I ask that you respect and understand the difficult decisions that parents who have had tragic vaccination reactions like ours have faced. We live with that pain every day.

Ladies and gentlemen, I respectfully ask that you seek a way forward to better understand the issues that compel parents into making difficult decisions regarding vaccinations. The issues are real and painful.

There must be a better way for us to protect all of Maine’s children other than by segregating a portion of our population as this law currently does.

Thank you for allowing me to tell my story. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.