

Testimony in Support of LD 174
An Act to Restore Religious Exemptions to Immunization Requirements
Dawn Murray, Edinburg ME

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, my name is Dawn Murray. I am speaking today in support of LD174.

I have five amazing daughters who have been deeply affected by Maine's current vaccination laws. Since 2021, my children have been forced into a new reality—one that excludes my daughters from access to a free public education, sports, music, and even simple experiences like dances and field trips—things now only "compliant" children get to enjoy. These are the moments that shape lasting memories to which my daughters are being denied. Our family has been shunned and ostracized from both community and society simply because of our beliefs. In a world that promotes the acceptance of all differences, my children are being denied the same opportunities as others in Maine, all due to our beliefs and the removal of exemptions under LD798.

My daughters were once so involved in a multitude of activities, surrounded by supportive friends. However, they now find themselves largely forgotten. Gone are the days of sleepovers and hanging out after school. They had dreams of attending college on athletic and academic scholarships, while working hard throughout their time in public school. In fact, my children were once highly regarded by this very government in 2019 when my daughter was invited to Augusta to serve as an Honorary Page in recognition of her outstanding academic achievements. Yet, in a cruel twist, my children were subsequently banned from school. These same children are now prohibited from being in the same classrooms as their peers all due to our beliefs.

As a full-time working mother, I am doing everything I can to provide for my family in a state most of us can't afford to live in and where INJUSTICE seems to prevail. If they wish to attend college as traditional students in person, they will have to leave Maine. This raises a troubling question: is the ultimate goal to push "people like us" out of the State of Maine? What is mind-boggling is that my children can still attend after-school events as spectators or volunteers, but are not allowed to participate in the event itself. Make it make sense.

My children are now experiencing depression and anxiety as a result of these life-altering changes. The emotional and psychological toll this has taken on my children is excruciatingly painful to witness and worsens with each year that passes.

They still feel betrayed by the very state that once welcomed and supported them. I have been there to comfort them through tears and frustration, while they struggle to

understand. As their mother, I am devastated and heartbroken because I can't take away their pain. We live in a society that demands we accept beliefs and practices that we do not share, yet what we are experiencing now with the current vaccination law is not true freedom nor universal acceptance. I end with this question: If we were to replace the term "unvaccinated" with "Black" or "Jewish," would it then reveal the unconstitutional segregation and discrimination we are enduring? I pray that you will vote "ought to pass" on LD174. Maine must do better.