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Rep. Marygrace C. Cimino

LD 174 An Act to Restore Religious Exemptions to Immunization Requirements

Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, Cross Building, Room 208

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy and distinguished members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, my name is Marygrace Cimino and I represent House District 83, which includes the towns of Bridgton, Harrison and Denmark. I would like to offer testimony in support of LD 174, **An Act to Restore Religious Exemptions to Immunization Requirements.**

There are currently 44 states in the U.S. that allow vaccine exemptions based on religion. Six states prohibit vaccine exemptions and Maine is one of those States.

On May 24, 2019, Governor Janet Mills signed into law LD 798, An Act to Protect Maine Children and Students from Preventable Disease by Repealing certain Exemptions from Laws Governing Immunization Requirements. This law went into effect on September 1, 2021 and applied to childcare facilities, nursery schools, post-secondary schools and healthcare workers.

The law was passed in reaction to the COVID-19 pandemic. Prior to the pandemic, Maine law allowed exemptions from immunization requirements based on religious beliefs. The pandemic has ended and it is time for parental rights over the healthcare of their children to be restored.

Parents, not the Government and not the pharmaceutical companies should be in charge of their children's healthcare decisions and to continue to prevent parents from doing so, when the conditions that led to this infringement no longer exists is a violation of the First Amendment of the Constitution. Indeed, the Free Exercise Clause, protects the right to practice religion without government interference.

It is for these reasons that I provide testimony today in favor of LD 174 and I encourage this Committee to do the same.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak with you today. I'd be happy to answer any questions the Committee may have.

A Christian Statement on Vaccination and Religious Objection

Introduction

As Christians with religious objections to vaccines, we share the goals of promoting good health for children and families, spiritually, emotionally, and physically. With these goals in mind, in good conscience we cannot agree to have the state mandate vaccinating our children. Some with religious objections to vaccination may choose to use some vaccines and some may abstain from all. We are united against religious discrimination which goes against our sincerely held beliefs.

Christian Reasons to avoid vaccination

1) Fetal Cell Lines

American vaccines have a serious moral issue with cell lines taken from aborted babies. The Bible teaches that "thou shalt not kill."¹ Biblically, murdering another person is a serious offense which brings the need for redress. As God told Cain when he murdered his brother,, "What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground."² In addition to avoiding violence, Christians are also told to advocate for victims.³

Some of the most common vaccines are only licensed in America in forms that include live attenuated viruses cultured in aborted fetal cell lines.

The Rubella portion of the MMR or MMRV is Wistar RA 27/3.⁴ It is documented that at least **eighty abortions**, likely more, took place in order to create simply that one vaccine.⁵ It also appears that the researchers involved had close relationships with abortionists, and obtaining babies' bodies *for the purpose of creating vaccines* was intentional. What persuasion or coercion of mothers to that end took place is unknown.⁶

WI-38 is a cell line sourced from the lung tissue of a Swedish baby girl⁷, and MRC-5 was taken from a baby boy. Both of these are currently in use in America, and this alone would be enough to give Christians serious pause. What is even more alarming is that the cell lines do not last forever, and there is a demand to continue to produce cell lines. One recent one is Walvax-2, taken from a Chinese baby girl. She was one of nine aborted babies used in starting this new cell line in 2015.⁸

Many Christians avoid vaccines which include fetal cell lines. This is due to the great loss of life in producing these vaccines, concerns about human dna remnants in the vaccine itself, and a desire to avoid creating an incentive to develop similar cell lines in the future. Jessica Farnsworth, MD writes, "The only recourse I have, and would argue any Christian should have, is to boycott these products. How else will the pharmaceutical companies be influenced to produce ethical vaccines...?"⁹

2) Sexual Ethics and Substance Abuse

The Bible says, "But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof."¹⁰ Christianity teaches radical self-control¹¹ and a lifestyle with high moral ethics, including lifetime monogamy.¹² We are to flee from sexual immorality of any kind¹³ and are not to abuse the body with recreational intravenous drugs.

For most people, sexual contact or needle-sharing are the only ways to be exposed to infections such as HPV (sexual only) or Hepatitis B. Generally, these vaccines are administered in order to enable one's children to make Biblically sinful decisions. If adults choose to pursue these lifestyles or work in high-risk fields, they can make the choice to get the vaccines. But to require Christian parents to provide them to children (who are generally not at risk of these diseases) is a violation of conscience.

3) Biblical View of the Body

We are not permitted in the Bible to treat the body in a way that we believe will harm it. The Bible teaches us that the body is created in the image of God¹⁴, the temple of the Holy Spirit¹⁵, a living sacrifice to the Lord.¹⁶

Some of us have children who have suffered vaccine reactions. Some have children with other serious health challenges. Some have children who have been told not to vaccinate by their doctors for health reasons. Some of us do not believe that one or more of the vaccines on the schedule would be a healthy choice for our family.

In addition, some believers may wish either for health or spiritual reasons to avoid blood products¹⁷ or products from unclean animals in the levitical law, such as pigs or monkeys.¹⁸ All of these items appear in vaccines.¹⁹ The scripture states that "to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean,"²⁰ and instructs us not to violate the consciences of those convicted over this type of issue.²¹

For those with a sincere belief that vaccination would harm our bodies, it is a duty to God to avoid it.

4) Love of Neighbor

Jesus taught, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."²² Love of neighbor is the second commandment of our faith. It is unloving to ask those families in our community who have already experienced vaccine reactions to risk further injury. There are some families with genetic predisposition to reactions who already have one permanently disabled child and are now being asked to risk injury with their other children.

It is also unloving to force others to violate their religious beliefs.

5) God's design for the family

Children are a blessing from the Lord,²³ and are given to their parents to raise and teach them.²⁴ This is a great privilege and a serious responsibility. The Bible instructs fathers to "bring [children] up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."²⁵ There are many charges to parents in how they are to raise their children in the Bible, but no such instructions to the government. Ultimately children belong to God, and He has given the authority to make weighty decisions such as vaccination to the parents and not to the state.²⁶

6) Church Attendance

Attending church is a Biblical practice. The Bible teaches, "And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together..."²⁷

Some churches have childcare centers, schools or other educational facilities on-site. In addition, some churches rent schools and hold their worship services there. Facility-based mandates do not allow unvaccinated or partially vaccinated children to come into school locations. They severely interfere in the practice of faith by discriminating against some Christian youth and preventing them from attending church or participating in church activities.

7) Christian Education

Biblically, Christians are to provide their children with a religious education.²⁸ Legally, the right of religious parents to enroll their children in schools which provide a private, religious education is also recognized.²⁹ Those who have a religious conviction against vaccines should not be excluded from private schools that provide this type of education. If we are prevented from enrolling our children in religious private schools, that is not merely a violation of medical or educational freedom, it is a violation of our religious rights.

Vaccine mandates may also prevent churches from providing religious instruction by opening a school, thus interfering with the church's faith expression.

Conclusion

The Bible is very clear that "we ought to obey God rather than men,"³⁰ and so we cannot sit idly by as laws that violate our beliefs are passed. We will keep our eyes on our "hope of glory"³¹ and even when it is difficult seek to find a way to keep a clear conscience toward God. There are multiple levels at which vaccine mandates interfere with the free exercise of religion. As Christians we oppose government coercion in this area and support free choice.