

My name is Christine Gross and I am testifying in support of LD96, LD156, LD833, and LD1082. In 1998, my husband and I, along with our two daughters, moved to Maine. We practice the Jewish faith and have always used the religious exemptions for vaccines that Maine allowed, so our children could attend school. Our family has grown to 5 children, three of which graduated from the Maine public school system. None of our children had ever gotten anyone sick as a result of not being vaccinated. 2 of our children are in high school. Since the passing of LD798, my family has been forced to leave the state of Maine and move to New Hampshire where we can continue to practice our faith in a way that we feel is best for our children. We would have stayed in Maine, the state we have called our home for 22 years, had we been allowed to continue to utilize our religious exemptions. We feel that we have been persecuted for practicing our Jewish faith. I have met many other families who are also planning to leave the state of Maine in order to keep their exemptions and do what they feel is best for their children and family. Parents who utilize religious exemptions do not do this out of laziness. There is deep thought put into their decisions. The passing of a law does not do away with these beliefs. It causes these families, such as mine, to make heartbreaking decisions which we never wanted to make. It also uproots children from their school and community they know and love. I ask that you please consider the impact that LD798 is having on many Maine families and the education of our students. I ask that you pass LD96, LD156, LD833, and LD1082.

Thank you for listening.