

Susan Brenner
Ellsworth
LD 51

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and distinguished members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, I am asking you today to vote 'ought to pass' on LD 51.

Maine families have suffered in the past two years. Maine children have lost their access to public and private education, and families have felt the heavy burden of being asked to choose between two things that in this country are rightfully theirs; the right to choose which medical interventions they feel safe and comfortable with, and the right to a public education.

As a Maine parent who has been homeschooling 3 children since 2005, I have happily supported my older two as they transitioned into both the new state charter arts high school and our local public high school. Our family was looking forward to our youngest attending the same local public high school, and planning for me to join the paid workforce full time. Since our exemption rights were removed, our great state of Maine has lost our two oldest children to other states that allow their philosophical exemption choice when it comes to their bodies and their educational goals. Our state has lost two incredibly talented (academically and musically) young people, and it is a great loss for all of us. Our family is currently looking into relocating so as to give our equally talented youngest child access to what she deserves educationally. You can help by restoring our rights.

Realistically, exemptions have allowed a small percentage of parents who opt to use them the right to decide their own medical path, and have no studied, discernable negative impact on our state, nor the other 49 states. Small pockets of illness and disease pop up everywhere, but there are no research studies that show any overarching negative risk on entire states as to warrant taking away a parents right to choose. It is important to acknowledge that vaccines come with a risk, as with all pharmaceutical drugs, and where there is risk there must be choice. We know there is risk and injury, and because we know this, we have a duty and obligation to allow each one of us sentient beings to decide for ourselves which choice we will make, not at the expense of an education, and in some cases a lifelong career as a health professional.

I respectfully ask you to vote "ought to pass" LD 51 to restore health choice to all our children, and their loving families who are making the best, most educated and safe choice for their children, our torn communities, and our great state of Maine. Let us be a leader in freedom and personal choice. I also urge each one of you to reach out and speak to one family affected by a vaccine injury. The mental, physical and monetary costs are lifelong, and there are no supports in place for when the vaccine injured's parents pass on. These parents, and our state, are facing the unimaginable.

Thank you for listening to my concerns,
Susan Brenner
Ellsworth, Maine