

Rachel Driscoll
Scarborough
LD 51

Dear Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and esteemed members of the Committee of Education and Cultural Affairs,

My name is Rachel Driscoll, a registered nurse of 20 years and a mother of two teenage children. I am here to testify in support of LD51, LD869, LD1098, LD1148, LD1209, and LD1228. I was a nurse at MMC for over 17 years when I lost my job due to the refusal of the covid 19 vaccine. I worked through the pandemic, was deployed to short staffed units, cared for covid patients, worked through some of the most unsafe conditions I have ever experienced in my career due to lack of safe staffing, poured my heart and soul into nursing and it all came to an end October 29th of 2021. There were no exemptions left due to the harsh mandate of LD798. With me nurses with many years of experience left as well. Some of the finest nurses I know with years of valuable experience, compassion, and the ones that will stand up for you as a patient to advocate for your rights also left that day. The exact number that left will never be truly known but it has left our healthcare system in Maine irrevocably harmed. The result of the sweeping healthcare mandates has left many healthcare workers without the ability to find work in healthcare now in Maine. Many nurses now commute to New Hampshire for healthcare positions, have left to travel nurse, and some have left the profession all together. I had to work 3 jobs just to provide for my family after I was forced out of my nursing job and my husband was forced to receive the covid vaccine against his will. It was the hardest year of my life and I almost left the nursing profession all together until by the grace of God I found school nursing.

School nursing has offered me an inside look at what school means to children beyond the education piece. It is where they receive their services, where they learn to work with others, where they forge friendships, where they get to participate in sports and much more. Every parent I have ever met has had a very valid, well thought out, educated reason for choosing not to vaccinate, or selectively vaccinate. As our current harsh mandates stand there are virtually no opt outs from the vaccination schedule and as we predicted physicians are fearful of even giving medical exemptions.

The removal of philosophical and religious exemptions has negatively impacted children and healthcare workers of Maine. Please vote to restore medical choice for what is right for the individual. Please vote to allow healthcare workers to return to work in Maine and children to return to school to receive the right to an education.