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I am writing to testify that I am in favor of the legislation to restore religious and philosophical exemptions to the vaccine requirements. As a registered nurse of 26 years I firmly believe that all people should be given informed consent, making a voluntary and educated decision, when having any medical procedures or medication. The same right given to patients should be provided to healthcare workers when they take their turn being the patient. Receiving an ultimatum is not informed consent. I was denied that right and lost my ability to teach at the University where I was teaching junior level nursing students and was unable to continue working as a clinical nursing supervisor in a local hospital. This mandate has affected the number of professionals currently working in healthcare in Maine as well as the ability to attract qualified providers to our State. Working in hospitals for the past 26 years I can assure you that most are understaffed. The care our loved ones is receiving is less than adequate at times.

My decision to decline the Covid vaccine was based on being an essential worker in early 2020 and catching Covid -19..When I asked the Medical Director why natural immunity wasn't being approved ,the response I received was " we haven't looked at that and are only taking the Covid vaccine as proof". We now know natural immunity is superior and should have been accepted all along. My declination of the flu vaccine was based on the fact that I had had severe reactions to it the last 5 times / years that I had taken it. My exemptions after that were always approved until this restriction went into place. I was told the only exemption would be a "documented" anaphylactic reaction.

In closing, I am a highly skilled nurse as well as patient advocate and believe that if I have the training and responsibility to save lives than I deserve the right to practice that skillset with myself.

Thank you
Darci Lane