

To the Members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs:

My name is Roberta Manter, and I live in Fayette. I am writing to ask you to restore the religious and philosophical exemptions to COVID vaccination. It is now recognized that those who have had COVID have better immunity than those who are fully vaccinated. I'm reasonably sure I have had it twice. In 2020, shortly before it was recognized that COVID was here in Maine, our daughter's family got terribly sick and shared it with us. They live in Bridgton, where just after Christmas break there was a nasty unidentified flu bug that affected so many teachers and students that a couple of schools in the area actually shut down. I was sick for a couple of weeks. My husband, who has a compromised immune system due to having lymphoma, and who has a history of reacting badly to vaccinations, was sick for twice as long.

The second time I suspected I had COVID, I didn't bother to get tested because it was fairly mild. Then I learned that a friend who was exposed to the person I got it from, had tested positive for COVID. My husband, (much to my surprise, as he catches everything that's going around,) only had a scratchy throat for a couple of days. We could only chalk it up to his having had a more serious case the first time, and therefore having built up stronger immunity.

Here's an analogy for Maine hunters. If you're out hunting, late on the last day of hunting season, and something moves behind the trees but you aren't sure what it is, do you shoot at it? Of course not. You don't fire unless you're absolutely sure you won't harm your hunting buddy or another person. So why would you demand someone inject something into their body when it has not yet been determined exactly what the outcome may be? I hope that others who have testified have at the very least made you unsure of whether or not COVID vaccines are safe.

The Moderna vaccine was developed from fetal stem cells. Science has shown that from the moment of conception, an embryo is taking in nutrition and growing; therefore it is alive. Its DNA proves that life is human. I refused the Moderna vaccine on religious grounds based on science. It was my understanding that the J & J vaccine was not developed from fetal stem cells, so when my summer job required vaccination, I took the J & J vaccine. It wasn't until later that I learned its associated risk of blood clots and stroke. If I had known that, I would have refused the vaccine on philosophical grounds because I had already had one stroke a dozen years ago, and now live with two small aneurisms in my brain which could shed a clot at any time. So as much as I love my summer job and depend on that boost to my income, I would have had to refuse the vaccine. Boosters are not worth the risk for me, but I trust my natural immunity.

Here's another analogy. Years ago when I lived in Massachusetts, they passed a "no fault" insurance law. A short time later I was sitting in my car, parked nose in to a brick building, when another car zoomed into the space next to me so fast it hit the building. It was a warm day so our windows were rolled down. I gave the driver of the other car an incredulous look. He grinned, shrugged, and said, "That's why we have insurance!" Similarly, those who are vaccinated have a false sense of being protected. Those who are not vaccinated are more careful because they know the risk. I know for myself, I had been very careful to avoid crowds, wash my hands often, and wear a mask, so I wouldn't risk getting COVID and taking it home to my husband. Once I had the shot, I caught myself being much less careful. Later it was revealed that the shot didn't

provide as high rate of immunity as was hoped. Those who had the vaccine could still get COVID without realizing it *and* transmit it to others. Those who know they are sick with COVID stay home, but if the vaccine keeps them from knowing they have it, they may go around merrily spreading it, thinking they are safe.

One mother spoke of her son who has immune issues and has to stay home because others aren't vaccinated. She complained that he's missing out on important aspects of his education because he has to participate remotely. I agree that it's unfair. I'm a firm believer that one function of government is to protect minorities from having their rights overruled by the majority. But consider this. First, those who are vaccinated can still spread the disease without even knowing they are sick, so depending on the shots to keep an immune compromised child safe is a false security. Those who have had COVID have better immunity than those who have had the shot, and therefore are less of a danger to children who cannot take the shot. And second, this mother should realize that children who are being forced to stay home because they are depending on natural immunity instead of an experimental and unproven shot suffer the same deprivations as her child. I'm sure there are many more children in that category, so you must consider how to do the least harm to the greatest number of Maine's children.

My grandchildren are home schooled. Their family chose not to get vaccinated, largely due to family history on both sides of bad reactions to vaccines. But being home schooled has not kept them from suffering deprivation of many educational opportunities. My oldest grand daughter plays fiddle, and her younger sister plays cello. Their lessons were put on hold, and they were excluded from Fiddle Camp because vaccination was required. They were prohibited from attending many other enrichment programs because they were not vaccinated. My oldest grand daughter wants to go into fresh water biology. But her options for Maine schools looked dismal until the recent lifting of the U Maine system's vaccine requirement. Finances for attending school in another state would be a problem. And if she went out of state, what is the likelihood that she would take a job there after graduation? Maine would then lose her dedication and skills.

Those who are pro-choice emphasize that what a woman does with her own body should be left up to her and her doctor. Is that not just as true regarding vaccines? People have tried to guilt us into getting vaccinated by telling us that those who do not may kill Grandma. Well, abortion definitely kills an unborn child, yet that choice is left up to the mother. Should an unproven scare tactic be used to remove a person's right to choose whether or not to have the vaccine?

It is well known how Voodoo can kill a person. If someone in authority tells a person who believes in them that they are going to die, the result is often that the person dies, even though there is nothing actually wrong with them. How many people have died of COVID who might have pulled through if they had not been told COVID was likely to kill them? My husband is "high risk" due to his lymphoma, but he didn't believe COVID would kill him, and he survived.

During the Influenza pandemic of 1918-1919, it was discovered that the survival rate jumped up dramatically when they started treating the sickest patients by taking them outdoors where they could get fresh air and sunshine. Why wasn't that widely advertised when COVID hit? Instead, we were told to stay home, avoid going out where there were people, and wear a mask - which

keeps you from getting as much fresh air. Many people were afraid to even go out of their houses. It has now been shown that the people who are most at risk of death from COVID are those who are obese and/or are deficient in vitamin D and zinc. It has also been shown that exercise, even as little as a few minutes of walking once or twice a week, significantly reduces the chance of death from COVID. So there are things we can do that will actually reduce our risk, but we were told our only hope was masking and vaccination.

We were told Ivermectin is dangerous for humans, and that it's *horse* wormer. Taking a horse sized dose *would* be dangerous. But Ivermectin has been used for years in third world countries to combat human parasitic infections. It's very safe and highly effective. Studies show it's effective for other conditions as well, including some kinds of cancer. So if it's safe, and seems to help people who have COVID, why has it been so vilified and prohibited? Because it's cheap! Drug companies won't get rich on it.

We've been accosted for refusing COVID vaccination because "vaccines have eradicated Polio and Smallpox." But Flu viruses are different. We've had flu vaccines for years, but are no closer to eradicating flu than we ever were, because it mutates so rapidly. We should know that, because there is a new flu vaccine every year. COVID is no exception.

The analogy of vaccine testing to randomized placebo testing of parachutes is ludicrous. If you jump from a plane without a parachute, you will die. There's no certainty that an unvaccinated person will even *get* COVID, let alone die of it. There's also no indication that wearing a parachute may cause serious injury or death. Yet statistics show COVID vaccines have caused many serious side effects as well as numerous deaths. If you jump from a plane with a properly operating parachute, you will most likely land safely. But it has now been shown that the vaccine is no guarantee you will not get COVID. There is even evidence now emerging that those who have had the most doses of the vaccine are *more* likely to die. If the survival rate for jumping out of a plane without a parachute were as high as the survival rate for having COVID, and if you had to choose whether or not to rely on a parachute with a known failure rate and a record of injury or death as high as those rates for the COVID vaccines, what would you choose? So comparing testing of vaccines to testing of parachutes is not an appropriate comparison.

Finally, I look at the experiences of our friends. We have one friend whose grandmother got COVID. She was hospitalized, and was quite sick for a while, but she pulled through. Then she got a COVID vaccine. Within 24 hours, she was dead. Another family's teen aged daughter was hospitalized with liver failure shortly after having the COVID vaccine. She had no known health issues before she had the shot. These are not some vague rumors of people we don't know, these are friends of ours.

If others have confidence in the vaccine and choose to take it, that's their choice. If we choose not to, that should be our choice. How would others like it if we mandated that they could *not* take the vaccine? They would be irate. We are simply asking for the freedom to choose. Please protect our American freedom by restoring the religious and philosophical exemptions from vaccines. Thank you.