

April 5, 2023

Senator Joe Rafferty
Representative Michael Brennan
Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs
Cross Building, Room 208
100 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04330

RE: Testimony in SUPPORT of LD 51: An Act to Restore Religious and Philosophical Exemptions to Immunization Requirements

Dear Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and esteemed members of Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs,

My name is Elizabeth Shardlow; I am a mother of five and a resident of Kennebec County. I have testified before this committee and others on the data and implications of vaccination exemptions in Maine.

I support LD 51 because the removal of religious and philosophical exemptions has deprived Mainers of a lifetime of education, from nursery school through college. Further, the implementation of the law removing religious and philosophical exemptions has caused significant hardship to Maine families and *school nurses continue to deny access to education for students, even when those students are in full compliance with the law and have provided proof of immunity.*

School nurses are blocking access to school for students who have fully complied with the law. The Department of Education has issued rules stating that “in the absence of a certificate of immunization, the child must present the school with laboratory evidence demonstrating immunity or reliable documented history of immunity provided by a physician or other primary care provider.”¹ Nurses have circulated information through their state association instructing schools to refuse titers for students and force them to complete a vaccination series, even when they have proof of immunity. I have been contacted by several parents and healthcare providers who have students (or patients) who have been removed from school even though they have positive titers which satisfy both the definitions in the DOE rules, and the statutory requirements of “adequate dosage of immunizing agent.” If a child has any vaccination record at all, the nurse is requiring that they continue to get vaccines even for those things for which they have proven immunity.²

¹ Section 4 (B) <https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/infectious-disease/immunization/documents/immunization-requirements-for-school-children.pdf>

² See 18: “Titers should only be used for individuals who cannot locate their immunization records.” https://www.maine.gov/doe/sites/maine.gov.do/files/inline-files/Vaccination%20FAQ.10.2022%20Update_0.pdf

The implementation of the exemption removal has leveraged unjust power in the school nurses, who are interfering with the proper medical care of children. When a school nurse contacts a parent and instructs them that their child must receive additional vaccines, even though the child has laboratory proof of immunity, the nurse is circumventing the role of the child's primary medical care provider. Injecting additional vaccines into a child when they already have proof of immunity is almost always medically contraindicated. *Immunization is the goal of vaccination.* By denying access to school unless or until a child has received these additional, unnecessary vaccinations, the schools are using coercive tactics which violate informed consent.

Medical decisions should always be made between a patient and their provider. What LD 51 will do is restore the right to informed consent and restore access to education. It is the role of this Committee to provide for the education of *all* Maine children. Maine children and adults have been denied a lifetime of education in this state if they refuse even *just one dose of one vaccine.*

I urge you to consider both the known and not-yet-realized impacts of the loss of informed consent and a lifetime of education. Please vote ought to pass on LD 51 and restore access to education for Maine children and adults.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth Shardlow