

Cherelle Weymouth
Topsham
LD 51

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

I am a life long resident of Maine, mother to two children and former speech language pathologist before quitting my job to homeschool as the result of LD 798; A profession that as of today, has 70 school openings in need of a Speech Therapist across Maine. For those unfamiliar with the state of therapeutic services in Maine, there is a dire need of speech pathologists to meet the ever growing needs of our children and a shrinking pool of speech pathologists to fill those roles. Today, I am providing written testimony in support of LD 51, LD 869, LD 1098, LD 1148, LD 1209, and LD 1228.

When I turn on the tv, scroll social media or read the newspaper, I am continually told to be inclusive; To accept and honor other's wishes. We are told that the freedom to assert one's truth and be accepted and uplifted for that, is the goal of our society. Over and over we are told to choose kindness, to live our truth and to never, ever exclude a person based on a specific parameter. Schools and families are rallying behind the banners of inclusivity and equity except when it comes to one parameter. One small part of what a child is, their vaccination status. We will unite behind a child to ensure they have equal rights except if they are missing a single booster shot. We will tell children that everyone matters, that no one should be excluded, except if their family's religion inhibits them from partaking in particular vaccinations due to their ingredients or development process (aborted fetal cells).

Can you imagine for a moment, living in a society where inclusivity is the word of day and yet your children are excluded based on one, single parameter; In a world where children like mine long for the opportunities their neighbors have but are told they are unclean, a danger and will put others at risk.

The hypocrisy of this law is glaring when one looks at it beyond the surface. Children are denied an education based on vaccination status yet teachers have no vaccination requirements. Our children are allowed to attend sports games, sitting in the bleachers cheering on their friends but are too much of a danger to sit in a classroom. Our children may not be up to date on vaccines against diseases that are rarely seen anymore, but the majority of students are still unvaccinated against a very present virus that shut down the entire world in the past few years. The state of Maine allowed exemptions prior to 2019, and not once in our history, has an unvaccinated child actually given another vaccinated child a communicable disease.

LD 798 discriminated against a minority group of children. Regardless of how LD 798 was packaged, it is a discriminatory law which shows how disingenuous the rally cry of inclusivity is. However, you now have the opportunity to truly be inclusive. To practice what you preach. To right a wrong that I am sure you will hear the impacts of in others testimony. I am asking you today to vote ought to pass on LD 51, LD 869, LD 1098, LD 1148, LD 1209, and LD 1228 and show our children that they too matter, are worthy and included. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Cherelle Weymouth
Topsham, Maine