



**Testimony of Maine Public Health Association In Opposition to:
LD 867: An Act To Prohibit Mandatory COVID-19 Vaccinations for 5 Years To Allow for Safety Testing
and Investigations into Reproductive Harm**

Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services
Room 220, Cross State Office Building
Tuesday, January 11, 2022

Good morning, Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services. My name is Rebecca Boulos. I am a resident of South Portland and executive director of Maine Public Health Association. MPHA strongly opposes LD 867: “An Act To Prohibit Mandatory COVID-19 Vaccinations for 5 Years To Allow for Safety Testing and Investigations into Reproductive Harm.”

MPHA is the state’s oldest, largest, and most diverse association for public health professionals. We represent more than 550 individual members and 50 organizations across the state. The mission of MPHA is to improve and sustain the health and well-being of all people in Maine through health promotion, disease prevention, and the advancement of health equity. As a statewide nonprofit association, we advocate, act, and advise on critical public health challenges, aiming to improve the policies, systems, and environments that underlie health inequities – but which also have potential to improve health outcomes for all people in Maine. We are not tied to a national agenda, which means we are responsive to the needs of Maine’s communities, and we take that responsibility seriously.

Yesterday, Maine hit a new peak for hospitalizations due to COVID-19: 403 people. There are thousands of people with COVID-19 statewide. The reason those thousands are not all in the hospital is due to vaccination.

Vaccine Development and Safety Testing

While the COVID-19 vaccines were developed, authorized, and approved faster – in terms of months – than other vaccines; unlike others, they were developed with robust international collaboration and dramatically increased resources in response to the pandemic. Millions of people in the U.S. and around the world have received the vaccines, and safety monitoring continues to be conducted, and enhanced. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention uses [v-safe](#) (a self-reporting health checker system for people who have received the vaccine), and [Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System](#) (VAERS is a national system that collects reports of adverse events that happen after vaccination). The [U.S. Food and Drug Administration’s Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research](#) also monitors the safety of authorized COVID-19 vaccines through both passive and active safety surveillance systems and does so with domestic and international partners. This monitoring is working, and we know that getting the vaccine is safer than getting COVID-19.

Between December 2020 and December 2021, about 470 million doses of COVID-19 vaccine were administered in the U.S. Nearly 12 months of data, including from tens of thousands of participants in clinical trials, show that the vaccines are safe and effective at preventing serious illness or death due to COVID-19. It is worth noting that the vaccines were developed with the endpoint of preventing serious illness and hospitalization – not preventing transmission. While no vaccine is 100% effective, the success of these vaccines has been immensely protective of public health. In Maine, more than 70% of cases (77.7%), hospitalizations (75.3%), and deaths (71.7%), are among people who are unvaccinated.

Lives Saved

According to the [Commonwealth Fund](#), without widespread vaccination, there would be approximately 1.1 million additional deaths (3.2x higher) due to COVID-19, and more than 10.3 million additional COVID-19 hospitalizations (4.9x higher) in the U.S. (November 2021). Without vaccination, daily deaths from COVID-19 could have reached a peak as high as 21,000 per day — nearly 5.2 times the level of the record peak of more than 4,000 deaths per day in January 2021. For a point of reference, that’s approximately the population of Scarborough – per day. Without vaccination, there would have been an estimated 36 million additional infections.

Reproductive Health

There are no data to support any interaction between the COVID-19 vaccines and women’s reproductive organs or an egg that has been fertilized. There are also no data to support an adverse impact to fertility – including a plausible pathway for that to occur.

Contracting COVID-19 does pose a serious health risk to pregnant women and their unborn babies. Contracting COVID-19 can also be harmful to males’ reproductive health. A recent (2021) [article in Fertility & Sterility](#) found potential for negative impact of COVID-19 on testicular function, sperm production and male fertility.

Mis- and Disinformation

[According to the World Health Organization](#) (WHO), an “infodemic” is “too much information including false or misleading information in digital and physical environments during a disease outbreak. It causes confusion and risk-taking behaviours that can harm health. It also leads to mistrust in health authorities and undermines the public health response. An infodemic can intensify or lengthen outbreaks when people are unsure about what they need to do to protect their health and the health of people around them. With growing digitization – an expansion of social media and internet use – information can spread more rapidly. This can help to more quickly fill information voids but can also amplify harmful messages.” We are in an infodemic.

Vaccine hesitancy due to false information and myths has grown so large, that the WHO listed vaccine hesitancy as one of the [top ten threats to global health](#). Vaccine-related mis- and disinformation is not new to the COVID-19 vaccine; indeed, it has existed since vaccines were first introduced, and part of its basis is sowing doubt in research and scientific methods, promoting conspiracy theories that are nearly impossible to prove – or disprove, and using anecdotes and pseudo-science to promote the message.

What We Know

Data show that contracting COVID-19 can cause long-term harm to physical and cognitive health, in addition to hospitalization and death. COVID-19 can also harm male’s reproductive health.

There is no plausible pathway for the COVID-19 vaccines to adversely impact fertility, and no data to support any interaction between the COVID-19 vaccines and women’s reproductive organs.

Data show the COVID-19 vaccines save lives and preserve health. There is no reason to pause vaccination for the reasons outlined in this bill. Pausing this effort will harm public health. The Supreme Court is currently reviewing the federal vaccine mandates. Such a review belongs at the federal level, not the state level. In Maine,

we need to be figuring out how to counter mis- and disinformation and expand vaccine access to end the pandemic faster. Maine Public Health Association strongly opposes this legislation, and we respectfully request you vote LD 867 “Ought Not to Pass.”