

January 11, 2022

Dear Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and Esteemed Committee Members,

I am testifying as a board certified orthopedic surgeon in Bangor, Maine. I have been practicing orthopedic surgery in Maine since 2005. Prior to that, I was active duty in the USAF as an orthopedic surgeon. My family and I relocated and settled in the Bangor area, and I joined our regional hospital's team as the Medical Director, Orthopedic Trauma. I have practiced clinically throughout the entire pandemic, and continue to practice orthopedic trauma and acute care, as well as lead our health system's orthopedic service line, coordinating orthopedic care across Maine in our system hospitals.

I am here to tell you that LD 867 "ought to pass" for three reasons:

1. In my medical opinion, unvaccinated healthcare workers pose no further risks to our patients than vaccinated healthcare workers.
2. Healthcare worker staffing has always been challenging in our region of Maine, and has become worse after Maine put its healthcare worker vaccine mandate in place.
3. In my opinion as a physician, "shared decision making" is one of the most important aspects of medical care, and the coercion present with the Maine vaccine mandate eliminates any "shared decision making" if pt. feels that Covid vaccine benefits are not worth the risk involved, and their job in healthcare is at risk.

From my understanding as a physician, an unvaccinated individual is no more likely to transmit the Covid virus to a patient as a vaccinated individual. I do understand that Covid vaccination will decrease their chances of ICU admission if admitted to the hospital. So, mandating Covid vaccination is not protecting our patient population from our healthcare workers.

At this time, healthcare worker staffing levels are very low. From my clinical experience, I am seeing this everyday. We have eliminated our elective surgeries that would require inpatient stays post-operatively due to staffing shortages. When I was on call last week, I had three geriatric patients with hip fractures at 3 outside regional hospitals, waiting to be transferred to our medical center for evaluation and surgery. All had to wait excess days because of lack of staffed beds. Bringing back all healthcare workers, who had to leave healthcare after vaccine mandate went into place, will only help with our current staffing shortages. They won't fix the current problem, but they will definitely lessen the harm that is being created for our Maine patients waiting for clinical care due to staffing shortages.

I was taught early in my medical education about "shared decision making" with patients, when choosing the best medical treatment for them. This involves going through all the "risks and benefits" of any treatment that they receive. Personally, I feel that they should make these treatment decisions free of any unsolicited input

and/or coercion. If a patient wants my opinion, once I have explained all the risks/benefits, I am happy to provide my best advice/opinion based on my clinical experience and knowledge. With the current vaccine mandate, I feel that there is absolutely coercion present, in that if they choose to not take the vaccine, they will lose their job in healthcare in Maine. In my opinion, this takes away any real “shared decision making”.

I want to thank you for your service to the citizens and people of Maine. Because of your dedication and work, we are able to truly enjoy freedom and the “American Dream” here in Maine. Please support me in promoting: **LD 867 “ought to pass”**.