

Robert Craig
Lisbon Falls

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and esteemed members of the committee.

I am here today to urge you to vote "ought to pass" on LD 867.

My name is Robert Craig. I live in Lisbon Falls. Until this past September 30th I had worked as an Occupational Therapy assistant at the same health care facility here in Maine for the past 14 years.

I am positive that I contracted what is referred as covid-19 very early in the year 2020, before anyone really thought that it was around. Before it was really even a topic of everyday discussion or in the news cycle every day. The year went on and slowly the virus was an everyday thing and then the mandates came, to society and to the community at my health care facility.

Though it was very sad to see the residents unable to physically be with their loved ones (window visits only), I was very proud of my coworkers in Rehab as well as all the other staff in our building. It was very stressful working under the conditions asked of us. No covid came into our building all of 2020. Then in January of 2021 the majority of residents and staff got their covid injections.

In the weeks that followed I noticed something different about the residents. Many of them had started to exhibit a rapid type of functional neuro decline. Their previous abilities and level of mobility and self care skills dropped. It was astounding! And then the deaths. I stopped counting at 8. It was distressing to witness these events. I asked the Nurse Manager if these were reported to VAERS. She had no knowledge of VAERS. I briefly explained to her what it was and suggested she might want to educate herself.

The Occupational Therapy profession has a set of core beliefs. One of them is: Freedom indicates valuing each person's right to exercise autonomy and demonstrate independence, initiative, and self-direction. The service recipient's right and desire to guide their interventions is extremely important. Likewise, that freedom is and should be allowed to a provider. If I don't have that, what type of clinician am I representing? If I am to espouse this belief in my patient but not afforded the same the validity of my profession becomes compromised.

I had built up a substantial amount of PTO during these times that I worked straight through this pandemic. My Rehab employer stated that I would receive these funds If I signed a letter of resignation. I chose to work until they terminated me. I did not receive these funds nor did I receive unemployment benefits. This created a financial burden for me.

I have been forced to leave not only a job I loved, but the profession I love by the unfair vaccine mandate.

Thank you for listening, and again I urge you to vote "ought to pass" on LD 867.