



Maine Families for Vaccines

P.O. Box 11284
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January 10, 2022

Dear Honorable Members of Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services of the 130th Maine Legislature,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on proposed bill LD 867, An Act To Prohibit Mandatory COVID-19 Vaccinations for 5 Years To Allow for Safety Testing and Investigations into Reproductive Harm. Maine Families for Vaccines is **strongly opposed** to this bill, which seeks to undermine both scientific consensus and common sense at a time when the consequences for public health would be catastrophic.

Proposed bill LD 867 is rooted in dangerous misinformation designed to sabotage our confidence in our doctors, nurses, healthcare workers, scientists, and government. While anti-vaccine activists spread wild conspiracy theories about vaccine safety, the real facts are clear: our hospitals are at capacity, hundreds of schools are experiencing outbreaks, and more than 1,600 Mainers have died from COVID-19.

Vaccine mandates are the only effective way to fight disease and protect ourselves and others. Immunization requirements date back to 1809, when a mandate helped eradicate smallpox. Mandates also helped to make deadly diseases like polio, measles, mumps, and rubella rare. No other public health intervention can help us reach the necessary thresholds for community immunity and protection against deadly outbreaks of COVID-19.

It's not enough to hope we can reach unvaccinated Mainers through the power of persuasion. A recent working paper from the National Bureau of Economic Research found that public health messaging and incentives for the unvaccinated in lieu of mandates are not only ineffective, but may even backfire. The authors conclude, "they are unlikely to yield the high vaccination rates needed to aid in producing seroprevalence levels that may be population protective by reducing transmission and morbidity of this novel virus. Reaching a goal of very high vaccination rates likely requires much stronger policy levers, such as employer rules or government mandates." (1)

The good news is that Mainers overwhelmingly support immunization and vote in favor of strong public health laws. In 2019, a statewide vote on Maine's school-ready immunization law (PL 154) won by 72 percent, the largest margin of victory on a referendum vote in our state's history. The families we represent are Maine's majority, and we are eager to end this pandemic and return to normal at work, in school, and in our communities.

Thank you for your consideration.

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(1) https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w29403/w29403.pdf