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Judiciary Committee
Government Oversight Committee

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer and colleagues on the Health and Human Services Committee, I speak in favor of LD 867, An Act To Prohibit Mandatory Covid-19 Vaccinations.

One of the hottest issues of our time, mandatory Covid-19 vaccinations, is now appropriately being considered by the right branch of government; it is time Maine's elected policymakers deeply consider the extensive impact this mandate is having on our communities, and on the lives of our people.

There are many compelling reasons to set a moratorium on this mandate, and I ask this committee to also consider the crushing impact it has had on access to healthcare, the splintering of our communities, and the devastation of individuals who have lost their livelihoods and their home.

The person most effected by a COVID-19 vaccine decision is the person themselves, in line with its purpose to lessen symptoms. However, as we continue to see, the vaccine does not stop transmission or infection. That leaves an individual to consider the impact of the illness itself versus any potential side effect. People make this decision based on a myriad of reasons, but no matter the outcome of their reasoning, isn't every person in Maine deeply valuable as a member our community, regardless of their medical condition?

Worldwide and in our own nation, governments have begun to create two classes of citizenry. We have the power to push back and foster equality, and a healthy and life-affirming respect for our fellow human, regardless of their health status.

There is agony among unvaccinated Mainers who have been forced to another state to continue their education as Maine's state university policies have caused our young people to seek welcome and make their lives elsewhere. One such young nursing student said, "I would rather be a mother than a nurse, and until I know that this vaccine will not impact my reproductive health, I will not take it." A thoughtfully reasoned argument.

Other young people have not yet left our state, but are sidelined looking for education alternatives, agonizing that their dreams cannot be realized. Do we really want Maine to prohibit residence and education opportunity in our great state based on vaccine status?

There is also great distress among those who have given up their jobs, facing loss of their home as they struggle to feed their family. There are also many who have been forced against their deepest sense of what is right, to accept the vaccine because the alternative is too dire-- a family in poverty. Is it proper and just to use such a mechanism for punishing a personal medical decision? And as we move further into this virus, with one variant after another, should Government continue holding vaccinations as the only key to our people's ability to live their life?

I have not enough time to tell you all the stories my constituents are telling me in regard to an increasingly deadly lack of access to healthcare. While this mandate did not create the shortage, it has pushed us into crisis. Maine needs healthcare workers so badly, that our hospitals are now allowing employees who are Covid positive to work in our healthcare facilities.

The virus marches onward, and our response to it will continually shift, but above all, even in our most dire moments, we must enact policies that are true to our Constitution, promote equality, and that value ALL the people of Maine.