

January 11, 2022

RE: L.D. 867 Emergency bill "An Act to Prohibit Mandatory COVID-19 Vaccinations for 5 years To Allow for Safety Testing and Investigation into Reproductive Harm."

Warm Greetings to Senator Claxon, Representative Meyer, and all esteemed committee members.

My name is Kristen Knopp, and I am a Nurse Practitioner living in Oxford, Maine. Please allow me to begin by extending my gratitude for your service in our government and thank you for hearing my testimony today.

I am here today to urge you to vote "ought to pass" for LD 867, An Act to Prohibit Mandatory COVID-19 Vaccinations. I am speaking out today because the COVID-19 vaccine mandate has had an exceptionally significant impact on me, my family, and those patients whom I was serving.

For the last two and a half years I worked at one of the few remaining chronic pain clinics in Maine and my role as Nurse Practitioner was to manage the safe prescription of opiates for my panel of more than three hundred patients. I saw these patients every 28 days, so I got to know them well. I heard from an estimated 20% of my patients who received the vaccination of their reported side effects consisting of but not limited to an overall worsening of chronic pain symptoms such as muscle pain, joint pain, elevated heart rate, and deep fatigue. These patients reported higher pain scores and lower quality of life indicators. For many, these changes persisted for many months without resolution. At work, it was a memorable day when a medical assistant suffered a cardiac event several days after her second injection of the Pfizer vaccine. We had to send her via ambulance to the hospital. Her providers in the ER told her she had an abnormal EKG and later she failed her cardiac stress test. Several days of work were missed. She stated she would leave healthcare if a third injection becomes mandated.

Among family members, my 79-year-old father who is a very thin and fit hiker, experienced cardiac arrhythmias and activity limiting fatigue for several months after his second dose of the Moderna vaccine. This prompted him to seek attention from his provider for a cardiac work up. He remains unsure what could happen with a third injection. My oldest son is a registered nurse at Central Maine Healthcare who was double vaccinated last year and was unable to come to Christmas celebrations with us because he was symptomatic with COVID 19, confirmed with a positive test and notably he also missed eight days of work.

Personally, I was unable to accept the vaccine due to the unknown effects it would have on my body. I could not calculate a risk/benefit analysis of potential harms because there is no scientific longevity data. From a scientific literature review, I knew there were concerns identified related to hormone dysregulation and viral reactivation which had implications related to my specific diagnosis. There was no time and no data for me to be sure I would not experience consequences from this mandated medical treatment. Further, I was keenly aware that if I suffered harms, neither my employer nor the state, nor the vaccine company could be held responsible. Who then would pay my bills and take care of my family?

I discussed my situation with my primary care provider, a nurse practitioner, who agreed vaccination was medically inadvisable for me and wrote a medical exemption meeting MRS Title 22, 802 4-B requirements. My employer did not accept this legal exemption. I was terminated from employment on November 10th, 2021. Because of the mandate, I was forced to choose between my career and the unknown consequences the vaccine would have on my body.

The COVID-19 vaccine mandate in Maine has resulted in my unemployment, financial hardship, no unemployment compensation from the Department of Labor to date, and it removed me from a job where I was providing a service to the Maine people who are already in desperate need of kind, compassionate, and skilled providers to support them with chronic pain and opiate management.

I am pro safe, effective, and necessary vaccinations as is evident from my status as a nurse and nurse practitioner. Please vote "ought to pass" to allow time for the usual standard of scientific study, analysis, and rigor to inform our consent for injecting new treatments into our bodies. Identification and reduction of harms must be a forethought rather than afterthought.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration for my personal circumstances and consideration for all the Maine lives affected by this mandate.

Sincerely,

Kristen Knopp

Nurse Practitioner