

Kurt Knudsen
Topsham

Dear Health and Human Services committee,

Let me first start by saying thank you for your time in hearing testimony from your constituents. Having an opportunity to voice your concerns with your elected officials, the ones that represent the will of the people, and in the matter prescribed by our laws for free and fair government, is a blessing and an opportunity. It gives me great pleasure to be speaking to you today.

This is my story and my testimony.

My name is Kurt Knudsen. I am a life-long resident of the state of Maine, a devout Christian, and healthcare worker unfortunately affected by the present mandates set in place by our Governor, and her appointed government officials.

Just under a year ago, I was accepted into the University of Southern Maine's Accelerated Bachelor of Science in Nursing Program. This was a tremendous accomplishment, and I was beyond ecstatic to begin my journey as a Nurse, and if all went according to plan, would be a Registered Nurse in 15 months. This was going to be hard work, but hard work reaps great rewards, and I was up for that challenge.

As my first semester drew to a close, my education hit a roadblock, and as of today, that roadblock is now a dead end. Why is it at a dead end? It's because my right to choose ultimately became the government's right, and in the pursuit of the greater good, my health doesn't matter to anyone.

I was given a medical exemption by my PCP for a CDC identified contraindication, anaphylactic PEG allergy. It was approved by my employer, but was then denied by Maine Medical Center, the clinical site for my nursing school.

The DHHS Rule states:

An employee who does not provide proof of immunization or immunity for a vaccine required under this rule may be permitted to attend work if that employee is exempt in accordance with 22 MRS §802 (4-B). Documentation for an employee's immunization exemption must be maintained in the permanent health record for that employee for a minimum of six years after termination.

22 MRS §802 (4-B) states:

A. A medical exemption is available to an employee who provides a physician's written statement that immunization against one or more diseases may be medically inadvisable.

Yet in spite of the law clearly specifying that a Medical Exemption is lawful and acceptable, facilities are acting on their own accord outside of the State law, and putting employees and students in an impossible position. Take your Doctor's advice, thus losing your job, or being denied education; or go against your Providers advice and hope for the best. Although you alone are physically, medically, and financially responsible for any potential harm.

Until something changes, I will not be progressing in nursing school. I already had to step down from the accelerated program, and now foresee myself completely withdrawing from the entire program. As are many others, furthering the strain on the existing staffing crisis. What did exiling people like myself from Healthcare even achieve? The same clinical site that I am barred from has had multiple outbreaks since then, despite being a fully vaccinated team.

You as our elected representatives have the opportunity to right this egregious wrong. You cannot mandate medical decisions, particularly medical decisions where the party being mandated carries 100% of the risks and a potential lifetime of health issues. Or worse; death.

Please look at these testimonies through the lens of freedom; and real safety; not by political affiliation or by stance on vaccination. People on either end of those stated

spectrums deserve the same freedom, and consumer protections as the next person.
Thank you.