

Good morning, Senator Claxon, Representative Meyers, and esteemed committee members.

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 a resident in Waldo County. I have been a critical care registered nurse for a little over seven years. I got into nursing because I truly enjoy helping others and putting someone else before me. I have always been a voice for the voiceless and an advocate for those who cannot or don't speak for themselves. In nursing school, they teach you that you are an advocate for your patient. I wanted to bring more transparency to healthcare as well as alleviate the undue stress that anticipatory anxiety causes on patients.

I moved up here in 2020 with my family from Massachusetts and was fortunate enough to get a job at a hospital in Bangor. I was a registered nurse in the intensive care unit for almost a year and a half caring for people at some of the worst times in their life including those suffering from Covid. Recently the hospital and the governor decided to mandate the COVID-19 vaccination for all healthcare workers. This coincides with a new law that strips religious and philosophical exemptions from those healthcare workers.

I was terminated Oct 18 because of sincerely held religious beliefs. I am being told to either inject something into my body with no long-term longitudinal studies or peer reviewed recommendations or be unemployed and that they're doing it in the name of public safety. Since I became a nurse, I've been taking care of people at some of the worst times in their life including those suffering from Covid. The whole time as an unvaccinated registered nurse. However, now I'm being told I can no longer do that, that I am somehow NOW a risk to public safety that I have to choose unemployment or a vaccine. I am not alone. There are a lot of other healthcare workers across the spectrum of roles including doctors, pharmacists, transporters, phlebotomists and the list goes on. In one year, we went from heroes to zeros.

The news reports increasing numbers of Covid cases many of which are fully vaccinated individuals. I have taken care of vaccinated and non-vaccinated patients. I have worked alongside nurses also some fully vaccinated and others unvaccinated.

What I do for a living does not define me. Who I am, my ethics, my morals, my principles and my beliefs mean more to me than a title. I will not be subjected to discrimination and segregation because of my beliefs. I am an unemployed registered nurse but I will always be a human being who believes in advocating for others, who believes in being the voice of the voiceless. Most main stream media are telling one side of the story and I think it is only fair that people know another version.

This is not about vaccinated versus unvaccinated and this is not an anti-VAX rant. This is one person's plea for others to listen. This goes beyond just people being terminated for their beliefs, it also affects those vaccinated healthcare workers who are choosing to leave because they too see the wrong in this mandate. This will only compound the staffing shortages that are currently plaguing the healthcare system.

There is no informed consent if you cannot tell me what the long-term effects are of a vaccine. There are also far too many people, fully vaccinated and boosted, that are coming down with this Virus to say that mandatory vaccination is the best option in protecting people against it.

I have been unemployed since October. I was denied unemployment, food assistance and I am fighting for fuel assistance right now because of mandatory vaccinations. I have a wife, a 1 yr. old and a 4 yr. old that I vowed to provide for and now the stress of struggling to find income without any assistance to help get us through until then is wearing me down.

As a six-year Air Force veteran with a combat tour in Iraq I understand the importance of freedom and I will always stand for freedom. I took an oath when I enlisted to support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies foreign AND domestic.

John McLaughlin
Jackson

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