

Taylor Smith
Hartford

Taylor J. Smith
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Senator Claxon, Representative Meyer and esteemed committee members,

My name is Taylor J. Smith from Hartford, Maine and I have been a Registered Dental Hygienist in the State of Maine since June of 2003. I have served the great people of this state in private practice since this time. I attended the University of New England, and the cost of that education was just under \$100,000.00. I have held steady full-time employment from the time I was licensed to the time I was forced out of my job on September 30, 2021. My employer refused to fire me, yet I was not allowed to continue working for James F. Helmkamp and Tyler Gagnon at Mount Auburn Dental and was replaced prior to the mandate extension of October 29, 2021. Ten days after the effective date of the mandate, the official mandate did not include dentistry, yet I never heard from my former employers and lost my job. I found work in a different profession for 1/3 the pay rate I was previously making, and this has impacted my finances and savings during a time when the cost of everything has gone up.

Being a woman in my late 30's I have concerns for this mandated vaccination on my reproductive health. My husband and I do not have any children. The risks for pregnancy over age 35 are already high, and the risk of taking a vaccine that has not been studied on reproductive health is concerning. I cannot risk adding more risks to my age bracket. I think we can all agree that we do not know what we do not know yet. I have heard personal stories from family and friends who have had impacts on their menstrual cycles following vaccination. My family also has a high risk of cancer of the uterus, breasts and vagina on both sides of the family. We do not know the long-term effects of taking a vaccine that is still being studied. Asking the citizens of Maine to choose between valid health concerns and their employment is wrong. I am not opposed to vaccinations; I have had all of mine. I am specifically concerned that this one has not had long term studies on the health concerns I have for my body as listed above.

The damage to my mental health has been more far reaching than anything and I will never fully know the true effects. I had Covid 19, and my immune system worked very well, as I had a mild case. The stress I endured from August through the end of October was far worse than anything I experienced with having the actual virus. The pressure from my employer to comply with the mandate, the daily news articles and journal articles on the counter, and the disgust for the decision I had made resulted in a toxic work environment. Having licensed professionals not working is also a waste and a loss for the State of Maine. I have impacted thousands of families in my career. I have many of them reaching out to me weekly because they miss me and feel their treatment has not been the same since I left. You cannot replace 18 years of experience in patient care. You cannot become a dental hygienist in the State of Maine without a rigorous college education and national, regional and state licensing along with continuing education credits every 2 years. This decision will have damaging and long-lasting effects despite the fact that we are now allowed to work again. Many hygienists have been displaced and now have strained working and professional relationships with people in their profession. I am requesting an "ought to pass" decision on LD 867. Thank you for hearing my testimony.

Sincerely,

Taylor J. Smith, RDH, BS