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**Testimony of Senator Trey Stewart
Before the Health and Human Services Committee
In Support of L.D. 867, An Act To Prohibit Mandatory COVID-19 Vaccinations
To Allow for Informed Consent
January 11, 2021**

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services: I am Senator Trey Stewart and I have the honor of representing 51 communities in Aroostook and Penobscot counties. As a cosponsor, I am before you today to present testimony on L.D. 867, An Act To Prohibit Mandatory COVID-19 Vaccinations To Allow for Informed Consent.

Nearly a century prior to the Coronavirus, the 1918 Influenza epidemic swept the country. And much like at the start of the Coronavirus, there was no cure or vaccination in place. After nearly 25 years, there was a vaccination developed and approved for use. I applaud President Trump and his administration for their work on Operation Warp Speed, which brought vaccinations to market faster than any other in human history.

While I am thankful for the rapid delivery of Coronavirus vaccinations, I believe people should have the right to information before being required to put something in their body that may have a lasting negative impact- particularly when they are making decisions for another they are carrying in the womb. The efforts made by scientists and health care providers to put an end to this virus are incredible, yet we know there have been cases where individuals have experienced serious bodily harm as a result of the vaccine.

My concern and reason for feeling so strongly about this legislation comes from the fact that we have followed the guidance of our Chief Medical Advisor and still people are becoming extremely ill and dying. We were told to mask up, social distance, and get vaccinated to flatten the curve. We did these things and yet we have the highest spike in cases. We know that both vaccinated and unvaccinated people can contract and transmit the virus, though the severity that they do may be different. With this knowledge, I believe we should give our scientists and researchers the opportunity to take a deeper dive into these vaccinations to thoroughly study them and the potential reproductive harm they could cause. We should also give people the time to wait before mandating something on them whose long-term effects are unknown. Recent studies show that antibodies are being passed on to the babies of nursing mothers, but it is going to take some time to realize the impact it may or may not have on the unborn – that information we may not have until a child is five or ten years of age.

I am asking that we pause and take the opportunity to fully understand what is before us before mandating people to take something without knowing the long-term implications on future generations. Considering the population impacted by this reversal in some mandates impacting pregnant women is low in comparison to the general public, I think the return is greatly outweighed by the potential risks to those in this limited population of our state.

Raising these questions does not mean that the people here today are "anti-vax" or whatever other label that seems to be awarded to anyone who asks questions about what has happened over the past year or so.

I've heard it said many times that we are in "unprecedented times," and I can't agree with that statement anymore. For the first time in history, questioning anything around "the science" is now considered "anti-science," and those who want more time to make an informed decision around their health are not given that opportunity, instead, they are fired from their jobs, excluded from society, and shunned by the masses. This is not right.

All along, I have said to folks publicly and privately that I am not a doctor and in no place to provide medical advice. Instead, I have encouraged people conversing with a doctor or PCP that they have a relationship with and trust to make an informed decision that's right for them. Mandating a universal policy without any exceptions is not the proper role of government. Surely, we can agree that those who are pregnant and whose health and healthcare decisions have implications for others is something that deserves an opportunity for a second, long-term look under this policy. Let's allow for these conversations to happen between patients and providers rather than precluding them with the diktats of the state.

Thank you for this opportunity to engage in discourse on this important matter here today, which I feel is greatly needed and has been sorely missed in the past year. I'm happy to answer any questions this committee may have and appreciate the input we are receiving from the public today.