



MaineHealth



State of Maine | 131st Legislature
Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs
Testimony of Hannah A. Hudson on behalf of Maine Immunization Coalition
April 3, 2023

In Opposition To:
**LD 51, An Act to Restore Religious and Philosophical Exemptions
to Immunization Requirements**

Sponsored By: Representative Drinkwater

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, I am Hannah Hudson, a member of the Maine Immunization Coalition and the Policy and Communications Manager at Maine Primary Care Association (MPCA). MPCA serves as the administrative home of the MIC.

The MIC is a network of associations, health care systems, and providers working to protect Maine people across their lifespan against vaccine-preventable diseases, by increasing immunization rates through information sharing and collaboration. As a statewide group, we undertake collaborative advocacy on immunization. Our efforts to promote evidence-based policies that result in improved immunization rates for children and adults in the State of Maine.

We are strongly opposed to LD 51 and the other bills being heard by the committee today. We will submit written testimony in opposition to LD 1098, LD 1209, LD 1228, LD 1148, and LD 869.

Maine's childhood vaccine law (LD 798/PL 154) passed in 2019 after a referendum effort and a statewide vote. 73% of voters, a wide majority in every county, chose to protect public health by eliminating loopholes in our school-ready vaccine laws. Prior to this, Maine had the 4th highest rate of non-medical opt-outs, which put our community immunity below the safe thresholds for disease outbreak.

We have already seen the positive results in our state from the passage of the law. According to data from the annual Annie E. Casey Foundation Kids Count survey shows that exemptions have decreased from 6.2% in 2018 to 1.8% in 2021.¹

All 50 states have policies requiring immunization for school and childcare, and all states allow for medical exemptions. A medical exemption is allowed when a child has a medical condition that prevents them from receiving a vaccine.² Maine's vaccine law protects these children that need to rely on community immunity in order to be able to safely attend school.

¹ <https://www.aecf.org/resources/2022-kids-count-data-book>

² <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/imz-managers/coverage/schoolvaxview/requirements/index.html>



Strong vaccine laws are not new. In past centuries, laws helped to eliminate smallpox. Pro-vaccine public policy has also helped to make measles, mumps, rubella, and polio relatively rare.

LD 51 seeks to bring back a debate that has already been settled numerous times through both evidence-based research and public opinion. We urge the committee to maintain the commonsense laws that have been put in place to protect the children in communities across our state.

MIC is happy to be available for the work session. Please do not hesitate to contact me directly at hhudson@mepca.org if I can answer any questions.

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