



MaineHealth



State of Maine | 131st Legislature
Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services
Testimony of Hannah A. Hudson on behalf of Maine Immunization Coalition
April 24, 2023

In Opposition To:
LD 1598, An Act to Allow an Exception to Immunization Requirements for Health Care Workers for Vaccines Approved Under Emergency Use Authorization

Sponsored By: Senator Stewart

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, I am Hannah Hudson, a member of the Maine Immunization Coalition (MIC) 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 promote evidence-based policies that result in improved immunization rates for children and adults in the State of Maine.

We are opposed to LD 1598 and the other bills being heard by the committee today related to COVID-19 vaccine mandates. Maintaining immunization requirements for employees of designated health care facilities to reduce the risk of exposure to, and possible transmission of, vaccine-preventable diseases is not new. The addition of the COVID-19 vaccine to the rules was done to protect Maine people, limit the spread of the virus, and maintain our health care system.

Covid-19 is a serious disease. Contracting it can cause pneumonia,¹ chronic fatigue², injury to organs³, acute respiratory distress syndrome⁴, septic shock⁵, blood clots⁶, and death⁷. Patients have a right to be treated in a safe environment, as do staff working at health care facilities, especially those with medical conditions that put them at increased risk of harm in the event of an outbreak of disease.

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/pneumonia/causes.html>

² <https://www.gavi.org/vaccineswork/five-things-know-about-long-covid-and-chronic-fatigue-syndrome>

³ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/long-term-effects/index.html>

⁴ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7361309/>

⁵ <https://www.cdc.gov/sepsis/what-is-sepsis.html>

⁶ <https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/covid/blood>

⁷ <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#datatracker-home>



The availability of COVID-19 vaccines was expedited through emergency use authorization (EUA), a tool the FDA can use during a public health emergency like the COVID-19 pandemic. An EUA can only be granted when no adequate, approved, available alternatives exist, and when the known and potential benefits outweigh the potential risks. It is the job of the FDA to ensure medical products meet rigorous safety and efficacy standards, a process that can take years for what’s called “full approval.” Though that timeline is condensed when an EUA is granted, the FDA still upholds its strict standards. An EUA only lasts as long as the public health emergency for which it was declared.⁸

On behalf of the Maine Immunization Coalition, we urge you to oppose this bill. Please do not hesitate to contact me directly at hudson@mepca.org if I can answer any questions.

Hannah A. Hudson, MA
Policy and Communications Manager, MPCA

⁸ <https://www.fda.gov/vaccines-blood-biologics/vaccines/emergency-use-authorization-vaccines-explained>