

Stephen J. Johnson
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RE: Proposed H.B. No. 5448: An Act Requiring Health Care Providers to be Vaccinated Against Influenza

Dear Distinguished Members of the Public Health Committee:

My name is Stephen J. Johnson. I am a resident of the Town of North Branford and I am a lifelong resident of the State of Connecticut. I have been a State of Connecticut certified Emergency Medical Technician since 2006. I work actively as an Emergency Medical Technician for American Medical Response in New Haven and I volunteer as an Emergency Medical Technician for Echo Hose Ambulance Corps in Shelton.

I am writing to the members of the Public Health Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly to express my opposition to Proposed H.B. No. 5448: An Act Requiring Health Care Providers to be Vaccinated Against Influenza. The rationale of the proposed House Bill is implied in its title; Representative Dan Carter is concerned for the health and well-being of health care providers, particularly as it relates to their infection with influenza. While his concern is sincerely appreciated, I do not believe it warrants legislation mandating health care providers subject themselves to medical interventions that they may not desire.

As health care providers, we are required to remain current with public health and medical research, including current literature and best practices regarding the prevention and treatment of infectious illnesses (such as influenza). Health care providers are perhaps the most educated as to the benefits and risks associated with vaccinations and therefore, make the most informed decisions when they choose not to obtain a particular medical intervention, including vaccination against influenza. Maintaining a mastery of their science and practice, health care workers daily assist their patients make decisions to achieve optimal health. Though we utilize our knowledge and skills to encourage a patient to make a sound decision, it is unethical and unlawful for us to render care to a patient without his or her informed and expressed consent. Proposed H.B. No. 5448: An Act Requiring Health Care Providers to be Vaccinated Against Influenza strips healthcare providers of their rights to refuse care. Frankly, it is unethical (and potentially unlawful) for the State of Connecticut to act as our healthcare proxy when we do not authorize the State to do so, particularly if we are of sound mind and make an informed refusal of the influenza vaccine.

Each time I have received an influenza vaccination, I have become ill. I received the influenza vaccination this past November and missed three weeks from work due to sickness. While I cannot empirically support that the influenza vaccine caused my illness, I have had enough negative experiences after receiving the yearly vaccine to elect to no longer receive it. I am aware of the risks. I do not require my patients to receive a particular medical intervention or treatment against their will. Please do not require it of me.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Regards,

Stephen J. Johnson