

6949

Testimony to the Connecticut General Assembly

March 19, 2015

Dear Valued Legislatures,

I am writing today to inform you that I oppose bill HB 6949: signing notarized forms that say I understand a medical practice, something which has nothing to do with my religious beliefs. This bill asks people to make a secular choice for a religious exemption, something which makes very little sense. I find it highly disconcerting that this bill also seems to violate not only the First Amendment, but also and even more compellingly the Fifth, wherein the verbiage of the bill requires parents to self-incriminate because they are being forced to agree to "the risks to such child and to others of such child failing to receive adequate immunizations" when they certainly may not feel that way.

It is my understanding that the state must show a compelling interest in overriding religious freedom. With a 98.53% vaccine compliance rate in the state of Connecticut, which is one of the highest, if not THE highest, compliance rate in the United States, and a roughly 1% vaccine exemption rate, I do not believe that the state of Connecticut has a compelling reason to override a religious exemption to vaccines.

I am completely opposed to this legislation and hope that you will oppose it as well. The threats to our Constitutional Rights are all around us and are even coming our own legislators. Just as "national security" is being used by the federal government to justify invading the privacy of citizens, the "greater good" is used to justify the unnecessary actions proposed under H.B. 6949, infringing upon the religious freedoms guaranteed to residents of CT under Connecticut's own Constitution.

While researching this issue, I discovered that the American Medical Association's Code of Ethics specifically recognizes that physicians may claim a religious or philosophic reason to not be immunized. AMA Code of Ethics Opinion 9.133 If doctors express the belief that it is ethical to claim a religious or philosophic exemption to vaccines, under what claim of right does the state have the capability of outlawing ethical behavior by its citizens?

Religion, defined as "any set of beliefs, practices, or ethical values." This definition of "religion" encompasses the "rights of conscience." That protection is in jeopardy and will further eliminate Connecticut's Constitutional rights. No citizen should have to prove or fight for their right to exercise their beliefs, it is a dangerous and dark hole which is eerily reminiscent of the yellow stars which emerged in pre-WWII Germany.

Vaccines fall into a class of products considered "unavoidably unsafe." This "unavoidable" word comes from the National Childhood Vaccine Injury Act itself, "products which, in the present state of human knowledge, are quite incapable of being made safe." If government in America is allowed to force its fellow citizens to risk injury or death without their voluntary, informed consent, then we are no longer free Americans. Our bodies are then owned by the state and can be sacrificed by the will of the state. Once you take away a parent's right to make medical decisions based on informed consent or religious beliefs for their children, it is only a short step before everyone loses that right to determine what substances will enter their body, since mandatory adult vaccines will quickly follow.

Published recently in the Federal Register for public comment is the new "National Adult Immunization Plan." The very first line in the introduction to the plan states "Despite the widespread availability of safe and effective vaccines, adult vaccination rates remain low in the United States and far below Healthy People 2020 targets." This misstatement of fact and denial of risk, in the absence of true vaccine safety studies, is astonishing when one considers a mere 29 years ago, the National Vaccine Injury Compensation Act was adopted acknowledging that vaccine injury or death may be "unavoidable even though the vaccine was properly prepared and accompanied by proper directions and warnings." 42 U.S.C. 300aa-22(b)(1).

In today's current landscape where the shrinking of human rights seems to be exponentially growing theme, I urge you to support a strong interest in protecting the individual rights and liberties of your constituents, please continue to fully consider the limitations on the personal liberties and freedoms of those who exercise their right to exemption based on their strongly held religious beliefs and oppose this bill.

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