

My name is Winifred Harrison and I am from Litchfield, CT. I am the mother of four whose oldest child suffered a serious vaccine reaction when he was 15 months old. So, the issue of vaccination and exemptions is very important to me.

I am here today to express my strong opposition to bill HB 6949. This bill would require "vaccine education" for parents who claim religious exemptions. A doctor has nothing to do with one's religious beliefs. There is nothing a doctor can say that would change someone's religious beliefs, so this is a waste of time and money. Parents get plenty of pro-vaccine information already. This bill is just one more chance for doctors to sell vaccines, and as with any product, when someone tries to sell you something they don't always tell you the downsides. The downsides were definitely underplayed to me when I was repeatedly told vaccines are perfectly safe and bad reactions are rare. Neither is true as I found out when I vaccinated my child. Parents deserve true, informed consent.

In addition, this bill would require parents to sign and have notarized a statement that they have reviewed and understand the material presented to them regarding the risks to their child and others failing to receive adequate immunizations. This is an incriminating statement for a parent to say they are knowingly putting their child and others at risk. Furthermore a parent might not hold this opinion--and they are not required to hold it in order to have their religious beliefs. Refusing to sign such a statement would result in not being able to claim a religious exemption. This would infringe on their First Amendment right to freedom of religion.

I would like to address why this bill is even being proposed in CT. CT has a 98.53% vaccination rate, one of the highest in the nation--even with an increase in religious exemptions being filed. Are we even seeing increased levels of disease in CT due to increased claims of religious exemptions?

What we are seeing, and you may be aware of this, is a nationwide effort to restrict or take away completely non-medical vaccination exemptions. There have been bills introduced, some withdrawn, in California, Washington, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Maine, Minnesota, New Mexico, Rhode Island, Texas, Maryland, Oklahoma, New Jersey, Vermont and now Connecticut during the past couple of months and last year in Colorado. This is not a coincidence, and this is not about CT.

Vaccines are medical treatments which come with the risk of serious side effects, including death. Vaccine manufacturers are not held accountable for these side effects and are, in fact, protected from liability by our government. They have no incentive to produce safe or effective products. We would not accept this from any other industry.

The vaccine schedule has expanded from when I was growing up in the 1950's--when everyone I knew got so-called childhood diseases such as measles, mumps, rubella, chicken pox--from five vaccines to over 60 from birth - 18 at present. We need to expand, not restrict, our exemptions as well and give CT a philosophical exemption so parents can decide if injecting their children with toxins, such as formaldehyde, aluminum, thimerosal/mercury, human serum albumin, egg protein, 2-phenoxyethanol and viruses grown on animal tissue and on aborted fetal tissues is the best path to good health for their families.

I know you all are concerned about public health but there needs to be more concern for the damage vaccines are causing so many children. I ask this committee not to vote for HB 6949 which infringes on parental rights to free exercise of their religious beliefs.

Thank you for your consideration,

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