

6949

**Raquel Zapf
Wilton, CT 06897
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Senator Terry Gerratana, Representative Matt Ritter and members of Public Health Committee. My name is Raquel Zapf, I am parent and an Early Childhood Educator and I am writing to urge you to NOT SUPPORT HB 6949. This bill will require parents or guardians who, due to religious beliefs, object to vaccination and therefore must submit a notarized statement they "have reviewed and understand information regarding risks of both immunization and failure to immunize." To be clear Connecticut allows for religious exemption. Connecticut should not create substantive requirements for a parent/guardian to exercise their religious beliefs when taking exemption to vaccination.

Connecticut has one of the highest vaccination rates of any state. And no one has even attempted to make a case that religious exemptions are resulting in increased levels of disease. This bill is an added expense to all involved and violates First Amendment religious rights.

Furthermore, this bill would require a doctor to provide vaccine education to parents who claim religious exemption. Nothing a doctor says will change one's religious beliefs: doctors have nothing to do with religious beliefs.

Parental informed consent is the standard in developed democracies around the world. There is no such thing as a mandated vaccine in Canada, the UK, Japan, Ireland, Australia, Germany, France, Denmark, Israel, Sweden, Norway, Finland, the Netherlands, Belgium, etc. Nineteen states allow exemptions for any reason including California, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Texas, Michigan and more than a dozen other where more than half of America's population lives. Twenty-eight states, currently including Connecticut, allow a religious exemption upon presenting a form stating a religious reason not to vaccinate.

Connecticut religious exemption laws aren't broken, please protect our First Amendment right of freedom to religion and do not support HB 6949.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and service,

Raquel Zapf