

I am writing to oppose HB 7005.

I have several deep concerns with this legislation:

Many families in CT prefer to use the option of the school nurse as the acknowledger for the exemption in order to limit exposure of their sensitive and private health information. I understand that there may have been confusion in the past with school nurses not having clarity that they are solely acknowledging a parents signature, and not agreeing or disagreeing with their decision to use an exemption. Nurses are free to decline, but again, if it's clear that they are acknowledging that the signee is who they say they are, there really shouldn't be an issue.

Parents have certainly not been asking for this additional option. While adding more options sounds benign, adding religious leaders to acknowledge a parents signature on a religious exemption could be confused with requiring their agreement, which is unconstitutional.

There is also deep concern regarding legislative creep and/ or the potential to use this bill as a vehicle to further restrict the religious exemption. Since 2015, there has been an orchestrated lobbying effort across the country to restrict and remove non-medical exemptions, with little regard to religious, constitutional or human rights.

The right to opt out of any medical product or procedure must always be preserved. With loss of vaccine product liability, the only barrier between industry and children are the parents. Whether one is part of an organized religion or not is irrelevant. Please note that recent court decisions have upheld the rights of individuals seeking exemptions from immunizations based on personal and religious reasons. U.S. Supreme Court case *Frazee V. Illinois Dept. of Security*, 489 U.S. 829, found that a state may NOT deny an exemption simply because a person is not a member of a formal religious organization.

I am very concerned that adding this requirement to the current exemption will only create more confusion around the idea of a signature acknowledgement and infringe upon individual's religious freedoms.

Thank you so much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Lisa Bauerle