

Dear committee members,

It has come to my attention that HB 7005 has been raised in your committee: AN ACT PROHIBITING THE ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF PARENTAL STATEMENTS CONCERNING RELIGIOUS OBJECTIONS TO VACCINATION BY SCHOOL NURSES AND PERMITTING MEMBERS OF THE CLERGY TO ACKNOWLEDGE SUCH STATEMENTS.

I have concerns over this proposed legislation. I have a hard time understanding why there needs to be a change in the religious exemption form as it is. It was reported that some school nurses do not feel comfortable signing a religious exemption form. The job of the school nurse, as the others listed is to solely confirm the identity of the person submitting the RE, they are NOT confirming or agreeing with the religious beliefs of the person submitting the RE. Maybe a better option would be to educate the school nurses on their actual role in signing a RE, so that they feel more comfortable. A school nurse would be best to have as an option because they do know who you and your child are and it is keeping within the HIPAA laws. Parents feel safer with a school nurse knowing their child's health/vaccination status, as that is something that should be kept private. No issues were ever brought up in the past of parents misrepresenting themselves to even need an acknowledgement signature on the RE. This was added in 2015 for no other reason than to cause unwarranted harassment towards people who use RE to opt out of vaccinations.

The addition of clergy is questionable, confusing and concerning. This may start to infringe on the first amendment rights for freedom of expression of a religion. There is concern that this could lead to further restrictions and the eventual removal of non-medical exemptions. We are all entitled to religious freedom in this country and the ability to interpret religion to what it means to us personally. We all want to do what we believe is in the best interest of our children.

Sincerely,

Dr. Jacqueline Flynn