

Dear Legislators and my fellow citizens of the state of CT and the United States of America, Land of the FREE,

I am in opposition to bill 7005: AN ACT PROHIBITING THE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF PARENTAL STATEMENTS CONCERNING RELIGIOUS OBJECTIONS TO VACCINATIONS BY SUCH SCHOOL NURSES AND PERMITTING MEMBERS OF THE CLERGY TO ACKNOWLEDGE SUCH STATEMENTS.

I am the mother of 3 children. I religiously oppose vaccinations. I am under the impression that the signatures available on the Religious Exemption are somehow seen as not adequate and changes are to be sought.

This change would suggest removal of a school nurse's signature. The school nurse is only verifying the identity of the parent when acknowledging the exemption, like it states in your bill. School nurses are required to acknowledge many documents that come into the school from hundreds, sometimes thousands of students on many different things and I doubt that they have "struggled" as another nurse has mentioned with doing so. It is their job. If there is such pushback from school nurses, surely education is lacking as to their role in the school system and their job requirements. None of their signatures on any document is an approval of parental choices. A Notary is also available to sign, notaries sign many documents on a daily basis, none of which they are need to agree or disagree with. Family Support Magistrate, Deputy Clerk, Town Clerk, Justice of the Peace, Commissioner of the Superior Court or a school nurse. I can tell you right now that there is only one person on this list that I would have easy access to on a daily basis and that is the school nurse. Removing them adds another layer of difficulty to turning in a Religious Exemption.

This change would also like to add members of the clergy to acknowledge such statements. Why? What other documents that are turned into the state or anyone for that matter would a pastor or priest ever have to sign based on your private beliefs? Do I need clergy to sign if I refuse chemotherapy for cancer based on my religious beliefs? Or if I refuse a blood transfusion? No, I am "allowed" to make that decision myself. I am allowed to make that choice as a parent. Frankly, asking that question alone is discriminatory and violates our civil rights. Asking clergy to sign these state forms also puts a target on them for persecution. State licensed workers are expected to sign things as part of their job, clergy is not. Requiring clergy to sign this state form increases state involvement in religious matters and increases religious involvement in state matters.

As I said prior, I am a mother of 3, 2 of them in Public School, I have been required to fill out and sign many papers every year, papers for enrollment, papers that verify other medical information such as the state physical packet, permission for Tylenol, permission for sex ed. class, permission for field trips, who can pick them up after school, dental work to be completed in school refusal form etc. Some of these I have opted out of based on my privately held religious beliefs, no special paper or signature was required. My identity did not need to be verified for any of these other religious objections. Be assured my personal religious beliefs enter every sphere of my thinking, my religious beliefs are part of every decision that I make for myself or my family.

Religious beliefs are personal beliefs and personal beliefs are religious beliefs. You cannot separate the two or ask someone to verify their beliefs. Freedom to practice religion is our 1st amendment right, a freedom protected by the Constitution of this Great Nation and the right to an education without stipulation protected by the State of Connecticut's Constitution. Furthermore, I suggest that the acknowledgement required on the Religious Exemption be stricken, parental signature is enough. No acknowledgement should be required at all. And no law should attempt to control my religious beliefs.

And rest assured that any attempt at removing the Religious Exemption completely, as I have heard someone on this panel state in a facebook group, would be egregious discrimination. It would prevent my children and thousands of other children from receiving a public education, therefore affecting the

opportunities they would have and skills they could learn taking them forward into adulthood. This would be met with extreme opposition from constituents from every town in this state. Thank you for your time.

Shannon Gamache BS LMT