

**I STRONGLY OPPOSE HB-7005 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 am writing today to OPPOSE HB7005. Removing the School Nurse as an option to acknowledge the religious exemption form is unnecessary and unfairly limits a parent's options. Medical decisions are private information in which shared with a School Nurse is protected under FERPA. It would not be protected in the same manner by Permitting Members of Clergy. The acknowledging signatory on the form is not required to "agree" with the exemption itself, they are simply confirming the identity of the person signing the form and that the form was completed properly, so I don't see why this change is at all warranted.

Deeply held religious beliefs do not only fall into the category of established organized religions with clergy members, nor is established religious doctrine required to practice free exercise of religious beliefs. This decision was already upheld in the U.S. Supreme court case of *Frazee v Illinois Dept. of Security*. I am very concerned that by adding members of the clergy to the exemption form, the other options may be taken away only leaving this one and therefore would discriminate against religions that don't conform to large organized doctrine.

As a citizen of the United States and the state of Connecticut, my child has a right to public education and my tax dollars pay for this. Children who have HIV or Hepatitis B have the right to attend public school while their medical history is kept private and protected – Why should a healthy child who is not vaccinated due to religious objections not have that same right?

Lastly, what concerns me most about this proposed legislation is that it is seeking in some way to remove the religious exemption all together. Removing the religious exemption would be unconstitutional as well as a gross violation to our human rights and ethically wrong. What is injected into my own or my child's body is my choice and I am free to make this informed choice based on deeply held religious beliefs. If this choice were to be taken away and the government given full rights to decide what is injected into our bodies and can force unwanted medical procedures onto us, THEN WE ARE NO LONGER A FREE NATION. This should be a profound concern for all, regardless of your stance on vaccination specifically.

I'd like to note that CT has one of the highest vaccination rates in the country. The Kindergarten vaccination rate last year was over 98%. The continued attack on a small number of families in this state who choose not to vaccinate based on deeply held religious beliefs is downright persecution. There is no compelling interest to make any changes to the religious exemption in Connecticut as it stands now.

Thank you for your attention. I sincerely hope that you do what is ethically and constitutionally right and oppose this bill and any other bills targeted at limiting or removing the religious exemption to vaccinations.

Katy H.

Fairfield County Resident