

This is my testimony in opposition to Raised 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.

In 2017, when acknowledgment of parents' signatures was added to CGS 10-204a in order for parents to claim their already legal right to a religious exemption to vaccination for their children, this addition included seven categories of people authorized to acknowledge these signatures.

To be clear, an acknowledgment is NOT permission to claim an exemption. It is to authorize that the person signing is who they say they are; nothing more, nothing less.

What is the motive to change this now? There is no pressing need to take off one type just to add another, especially clergy because the implication is a parent needs clergy approval to claim a religious exemption. They do not.

Having a school nurse acknowledge the forms is the best option for parents who don't want to reveal their private medical decisions since the nurse already gets the exemption forms. Why take away this option and make it more difficult for parents? Is that the purpose of our government, to grant a right and then dangle it just out of reach and to make a citizen of this country beg for it?

I would hope not, but more likely this bill is being proposed to put the religious exemption up for discussion with the goal to then eliminate the exemption altogether.

Many of you may be aware, as it has been well-publicized, that there has been a concerted effort over the past several years in many states to take away non-medical exemptions to mandatory vaccination.

Therefore, it is reasonable to suspect HB 7005 is yet one more bill in this attack on parental rights, and that the clergy vs nurse choice is not the driving force behind this bill at all.

I vehemently oppose any further restrictions on our rights to a religious exemption to vaccination. Please vote NO on HB 7005 and protect our religious and parental rights.

Thank you,

Winifred Harrison
President, Connecticut Vaccine Rights League