



Thursday, February 7, 2019

Dear committee members,

I am writing to you today concerning 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 2015 legislation was passed that required individuals who took exemption to vaccination based on religious beliefs to have their exemption documentation witnessed by an "authority". Prior to this legislation no witness of parental or guardian signature was required. There is no stated or justifiable reason for this "witness" other than to harass people using the religious exemption. No issues were ever brought up regarding parents misrepresenting themselves to compel this acknowledgment prior to its implementation. The current proposal (HB 7005) is redundant, unconstitutional and an inefficient utilization of our legislature and our tax payer dollars.

As a citizen, parent and physician, I have several concerns with this proposed legislation.

1. Changing the "Authorities" who may witness and testify a parental or guardian signature for religious exemption does nothing to enhance the current process.
2. Adding clergy as an authority to witness parental or legal guardian signature is unnecessarily burdensome and in violation of the rights of a U.S. citizen. The Supreme Court of the United States ruled that a state may NOT deny an exemption simply because a person is not a member of a formal religious organization (*Frazee V. Illinois Dept. of Security*, 489 U.S. 829).
3. Parents should not have to prove their religious beliefs by having a clergy acknowledge their letters.
4. Many families who choose to utilize a school nurse as witness do so in order to maintain their Private Health Information (PHI). The nurse option was added to protect unnecessary exposure of student's health information and to make the new law less inconvenient (which is the only reason it is in jeopardy at this time).
5. Amongst the greatest concerns is that this is a case of legislative creep. It appears that this bill may be a step in a progression to further restrict and ultimately eliminate the religious exemption. We have witnessed orchestrated lobbying efforts across the country to restrict and remove non-medical exemptions, with little regard to religious, constitutional or human rights.
6. An individual has the right to protect themselves and their children. The right to opt out of any medical procedure is one that must continue to be preserved. Vaccine manufacturers are immune to lawsuit and liability for adverse reactions, damage and death caused by the administering of their product. Evidence (both anecdotal and scientific) has proven that there are mild to serious risks with vaccinating. Every vaccine manufacturer's insert that accompanies a vaccine clearly defines the side effects and potential risks, both mild to moderate as well as serious. Therefore the only protection a child has from any potential adverse reactions is its parents. I can think of no other industry absolved from any negative repercussions derived from the use of its product.

In summary, a religious belief is a deeply held conviction. Such convictions are private and protected therefore exemptions based upon those convictions should not require attestation (by clergy, nurse, or any official) however since the current law for religious exemption is adequate there is no justifiable reason for change.

I thank you for taking the time to read my comments. I urge you to kill this legislation as it provides no benefit or service to the citizens of Connecticut. Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dr. Jenkins", written in a cursive style.

Dr. Jason R. Jenkins DC