

I'm writing to submit testimony concerning HB 7005. I strongly believe that any bill that threatens religious exemptions of vaccines is a direct threat to freedom of religion in this state for the following reasons.

1. How can we accept and respect that many religions require specific dietary restrictions, but not accept that vaccines which contain animal and human proteins and byproducts might be in conflict with religious adherence for persons of faith.
2. Extremely small subsets of Christians, Muslims, Jews, Jehovah's Witnesses and Seventh Day Adventists all hold tenets which preclude vaccination with animal and/or human byproducts.
3. If we force these populations to vaccinate and introduce animal and human biological materials into their bodies against their religious beliefs, where do we draw the lines? Will we force Jehovah's Witnesses to receive blood transfusions? Will we force Jews, Muslims, or SDA's to receive bovine valve replacements?
4. In enforcing these vaccine requirements without the exception of religious exemptions, we are likely depriving students of the right to an education and disenfranchising religious subgroups.
5. In doing this we make education a medical battle ground, when it should be a safe place for learning and family support.
6. And for what? Unvaccinated children are required to stay home during an outbreak. Also, research shows us many times vaccine shedding is behind recent outbreaks of "vaccine preventable diseases." In other words- many of the latest outbreaks of whooping cough for example, have happened largely from and within vaccinated populations.
7. The benefits of perceived health protection are so significantly small compared to the monumental change in religious freedom vaccine exemptions afford Connecticut residents.

I urge you to consider the above points and vote against any legislation to remove or restrict vaccine exemptions.

Sincerely,

Austin McCaslin, Middletown, CT