

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing today to submit my testimony as a concerned parent and citizen of Connecticut in regards to HB 7005.

Religious freedom is one of the key foundations of not just our state, but our entire nation. Our country was founded on the principal that every American has the freedom to practice their religion as they choose and that the government shall not have governing power over the people's religion. This is important because our founders fled a nation where the King had power over the government and the church, meaning that he could dictate their entire way of life. The United States governing documents were written for the purpose of protecting the people and the church from the government becoming overreaching, as clearly seen in the First Amendment.

By adding clergy to the religious exemption form, we are once again allowing the government to step over it's boundaries into our religious lives. The purpose of the acknowledgement is simply to prove that I am who I am, that my identity allows me to lawfully fill out a form for my child, not so that the acknowledging person can prove if my religious exemption is fitting or true. By adding clergy, in essence you are putting clergy on the spot to say that they agree with the religious exemption and that they believe that my religious views prohibit me from administering vaccinations to my child. It is not the government's place to ask clergy to submit a statement of "proof" that there are true religious beliefs that prohibit their parishioners from vaccinating. In addition, if the purpose of the acknowledgement form is simply to acknowledge that I have the lawful right to make these claims for my child, then a nurse signing the form is not stepping over their scope of practice. Again, it's not saying that they support or agree with my stance, but rather that I have proven my identity and therefore my right to submit this form on behalf of my child.

As for the statement submitted by the AAP, it is null and void since this is a religious freedom issue, not a medical issue. They are grossly stepping outside of their boundaries and outside of their scope of practice. Making the statement that all exemptions except for medical exemptions should be revoked is a grotesque infringement on the religious, philosophical, and moral freedoms of all Americans.

The religious exemption is so important to my family and allows my children to attend the public school that they love. It allows me to have a village within the school to help me raise my children to be the people they were made to be. It enables them to play the sports that they love and one day, I hope to send them to overnight camp so that they can have some of the foundational childhood experiences that I was able to experience.

I appreciate your reading of my statement today.

Best,

Ashley Murcia