

February 6, 2019

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**Opposition to 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.**

Members of the Children's Committee,

I **oppose** House Bill 7005. While on the surface this bill may appear straightforward, closer examination reveals some very concerning issues.

**Striking school nurse from the religious exemption is not logical or necessary and can reasonably lead to harassment.** The school nurse is the person who keeps the form on file and should be the *only* person to whom parents are required to disclose their child's medical status. Having to take the form to a stranger in a public setting is invasive and can be very uncomfortable. The particular school nurses who object have clearly misunderstood their role in the acknowledgement of the form. They are NOT being asked by current law to validate or condone anyone's beliefs or choices; *they are simply acknowledging that the person submitting the form is the parent or guardian.* Providing information to nurses on this issue and clarifying their role is very simple and does NOT require legislation.

**Adding clergy to the exemption is not logical or necessary and sets the stage for discrimination.** The law in CT protects everyone from discrimination based on his or her religious creed (as is stated in the CT General Statutes Chapter 814c, 46A-64). There are many who do not belong to an organized or locally based religious group. Adding clergy sets the stage for discrimination against those who fall into this category, particularly if the only remaining signatories exclude the school nurse. Acknowledging documents for school files has nothing to do with being a member of the clergy. *Acknowledging a signature on an exemption form has absolutely nothing to do with the nature of a person's religious beliefs or creed.*

**This bill opens the door to blatant religious discrimination and the denial of a free and public education, which is the right of all children aged five and over** (CT General Statutes Chapter 164 Section 10-15c). This bill has been presented under the guise of a simple clerical change. IT IS NOT A MEDICAL BILL. The AAP, however, has already called for an amendment of this bill to strip parent's religious rights and choices away completely. Allowing such an unnecessary and illogical bill with such potential for discrimination to progress further is a dangerous and slippery slope. That is not what our country was founded on and the Connecticut legislature owes its constituents more than that. Bills with questionable intent remove any trust we may have had in our government.

There is NO NEED to change the current law. It has been working fine and the people involved simply need to understand their roles.

Please vote "**No**" to HB-7005.

Thank you