

Dear Members of the Children's Committee,

I am writing in opposition of 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. I urge you to OPPOSE this bill.

The school nurse is listed as one of a few people that may acknowledge a parent's signature on the Religious Exemption form. Many families utilize this option, as it minimizes the number of people that need to be made aware of their child's personal health information. To my knowledge, parents are not asking for removal of the school nurse from the form, so does the change need to be made?

The second aspect of this bill involves adding members of clergy as an approved person to acknowledge the Religious Exemption. While in theory, this seem harmless, I feel it will begin to encroach on the separation of church and state. The Religious Exemption form is the only school form that requires the parents' signatures be acknowledged. This should not be the role of the clergy members of a person's church or religious institution. The addition of clergy to acknowledge one's statement could be confused with requiring their agreement or approval of personal religious beliefs. Clergy members do not need to be involved in these private matters of their members. Personal religious convictions that are based on one's faith, spiritual beliefs, and interpretations of God's teachings, are private. The choices to live a certain way or follow or not follow certain medical procedures is a deeply personal choice.

Our country was built on the foundation of freedom for all, and religious freedom is at the forefront in the First Amendment. We have the right to practice religious beliefs freely. Passing HB 7005 would begin to blur the separation of church and state. It is unconstitutional and creates religious discrimination with little regard to human rights. Further, Section 20 from the Article First of the Constitution of the State of CT, states: "No person shall be denied the equal protection of the law nor be subjected to segregation or discrimination in the exercise or enjoyment of his civil or political rights because of religion, race, color, ancestry or national origin." This bill is a direct violation of our Constitution.

We live in a nation where we have more freedoms than many other countries around the globe. But here we are, with one of our most important freedoms, being targeted. It makes me uncomfortable to think that my personal, deeply held religious beliefs and the way I lead my life based off my religious convictions, could lead to discrimination of myself and my children. So many generations have fought for equality for all people; let us not undo progress that has been made in our country. I urge you, to please oppose HB 7005.

Sincerely and Respectfully,

Kristine Rabel

Shelton