

7 February, 2019

Esteemed Members of the Children's Committee:

I am here today to comment upon HB7005 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.

This bill is unnecessary and lacks sufficient reason to take up the time of this committee and those gathered here; it is a drain upon the resources of the State of CT.

What is the compelling argument for switching out the role of the school nurse with that of a clergy? Aside from some anecdotal evidence that some nurses may have misunderstood their role in the filing of the religious exemption, the evidence supporting this bill is weak. The education of nurses as to their role in the filing of religious exemptions can be accomplished in a single letter. Simply stated, nurses are only confirming the identity of the person who is filing the religious exemption. They are neither agreeing with nor condoning the parents' choice regarding the health of their child. Any perceived moral or ethical responsibility to their professional training with respect to the risks of vaccinating or not vaccinating is misplaced.

The school nurse is in many cases the preferred option for parents who pursue a religious exemption. This makes sense as it is optimal to limit exposure of sensitive health information. The replacement of the school nurse with a clergy member treads upon the seventh article of the CT constitution which states that

no person shall by law be compelled to join or support, nor be classed or associated with, any congregation, church or religious association. No preference shall be given by law to any religious society or denomination in the state

The assumption of the bill is that all parents seeking a religious exemption to vaccination are members of an established religious organization. Those who have strong religious convictions often follow non-traditional religions.

Given the superfluous nature of this bill as written, one can only speculate as to the true intent of its promulgators. In the current environment of media-hype surrounding so called “vaccine hesitancy” it seems that the aim here is to bring a bill to the floor to be amended, thereby circumventing the rights of CT citizens to publicly debate and comment upon the importance of the option of religious exemption to vaccination.

For these reasons I strongly encourage you to vote against this bill.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Saines