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To the members of the Committee on Children

This testimony is submitted in **OPPOSITION** of: H.B. No. 7005 (RAISED) 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.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in **opposition** of HB 7005:

Please, please, oppose this act. The Bill of Rights was put in place for a reason and the First one states "***Prohibits Congress from making any law respecting an establishment of religion, impeding the free exercise of religion***, abridging the freedom of speech, infringing on the freedom of the press, interfering with the right to peaceably assemble or prohibiting the right to petition the government". As a mother, a wife and an American, I find this act an insult and violation of my rights. I must question the motive given it is brought forth by a group who are monetarily rewarded by high rates of adherence to the vaccine schedule and punished otherwise.

This act is wrong on so many levels:

- It feels like a stepping stone closer to the complete elimination of religious exemptions to vaccines. Eliminating religious exemptions to vaccines equals mandates. Mandates are the same as eliminating individual worth. In other words, you are forcing a person to submit to an authority (governmental or medical) and in doing so stripping them of free will.
- The vaccination rate in CT is very high. I do not feel there is a need for any additional moves towards making religious exemptions more difficult to attain or in eliminating them.
- I find it extremely chilling the prospect of being a parent with deeply held religious beliefs and having to have a 3rd party acknowledge those beliefs. Religion is a personal matter. No one, not even clergy, can acknowledge what a person feels so deeply in the core of their very being. Needless to say, this act would be discriminatory against those whose religion has no clergy.
- Please do not listen to anyone who says that vaccination is the only way to protect public health. In fact, it was written in the history books not too long ago that the greatest accomplishment in the prevention and spread of disease was with access to clean drinking water, better hygiene, sewer systems, child labor laws and access to better nutrition.
- Parents who follow their sincere beliefs and do not inject toxins, foreign DNA, probable carcinogenic ingredients, neurotoxins, or aborted fetal cell lines are not bad parents. Many of us have the healthiest of children because there are other ways to achieve health while adhering to religious guidelines. I for one have incredible respect for the body given to me by God.
- Religious freedom is the bedrock of this beautiful country. A religious exemption exists because we live in a country where individual freedom is paramount. People flee other countries to come here for this freedom. Protecting rights of conscience permeates the soul of every true American.
- Vaccines come with risks. Where there are risks, there must be freedom of choice.
- Finally and most importantly. You may not agree with those who choose to follow their religious beliefs and not vaccinate. That is OK. We teach our children not to bully. We teach them they may not feel or think or even understand another person, but we must be kind, respectful and tolerant. Should we not apply that same thinking here?