

Dear Children's Committee:

I live in Bethany and I support HB7005. I read the raised bill today in its entirety and agree that vaccine exemptions should require approval from clergy and that school nurses should be removed from the list. I regret that I did not notice this bill in time to testify in person.

My daughter, Mary, was born on August 4, 2018. She was in the NICU for 17 days. Mary is doing well now. She still has a visiting nurse and birth to three services. She is also a patient at the Yale NICU "graduate" program. Mary has appointments with her neurosurgeon and also with cardiology. She has been through a lot in her 6 months of life.

Mary is exactly on schedule with her vaccines. The very real possibility that Mary could get sick from an unvaccinated child in the community has worried us very much. Mary is at risk because she does not yet have all of her vaccines. We have intentionally avoided children we know who are not vaccinated. We were thrilled when Mary's pediatrician informed us that her practice does not accept unvaccinated children. It is unconscionable that a compromised child like Mary should be put at unnecessary risk because of an irrational fear of vaccines.

This is a serious public safety issue. People who do not vaccinate their children should not be allowed to have their children in public schools unless they can show a valid religious exemption. By the way, I am curious to know which religions oppose vaccines.

I have attached a photograph of Mary at 4 weeks old. Her surgery is only a small part of her story. It was heartbreaking and stressful, but we are so blessed that she survived and that she is thriving. She is an absolute joy. We are very fortunate that she is doing well and laughing with us every day.

Thank you,
Gina Teixeira