

1 TO: STATE OF CONNECTICUT PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE

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3 FROM: PETER T. SZYMONIK

4 GLASTONBURY, CT

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6 DATE: 23 FEBRUARY 2019

7 RE: PUBLIC TESTIMONY AGAINST SB94, SB858 AND HB 7199

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9 My name is Peter Szymonik, I am a 55-year-old Polish immigrant and have  
10 lived in Connecticut most of my life. I have spent most of my career working  
11 in or for the legal and technology industries. I have also worked in  
12 pharmaceutical industry and now work in the healthcare insurance industry.

13 I am a father and stepfather of five children ranging in age from seven  
14 months to 17 years old. Two of my sons have autism. My wife Monica and I met  
15 at the State Capitol in 2014, testifying about the need for much needed  
16 reforms of our state's family court system. We advocate for children and  
17 families of disabilities and for the fundamental rights of parents.

18 I am not "anti-vax." I am opposed to the concept that government should  
19 be allowed to mandate medical treatments or that government interests  
20 override the importance of informed consent and doctor-patient relationships  
21 when it comes to medical decision making.

22 I am very concerned that the current debate regarding vaccination is  
23 politically motivated and based on fear mongering, and also targeting a very  
24 small group of concerned parents to promote that agenda, rather than being in  
25 response to any actual threat to national health or reality based in fact.

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PUBLIC TESTIMONY AGAINST SB94, SB858 AND HB7199

1 **A European Perspective**

2 An article was published on May 3, 2017 in The Parliament Magazine, one  
3 of the most respected independent news journals covering European politics  
4 and policy. The article was written by Piernicola Pedicini, an Italian member  
5 of Parliament's Environment, Public Health and Food Safety Committee. Mr.  
6 Pedicini analyzed vaccine policy in 30 different European countries and found  
7 that "Not only is there no significant difference in vaccine coverage among  
8 countries that adopted a mandatory approach and those who favored  
9 recommendation [voluntary and informed consent], but that in some cases the  
10 latter also proved more effective."

11 The article illustrated that these countries **do not** mandate  
12 vaccination: Austria, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany,  
13 Iceland, Ireland, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal,  
14 Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom. In Belgium, only one vaccine is  
15 mandatory, in France there are three, while Greece, Italy and Malta  
16 have four compulsory vaccines.

17 Of note, the European countries that had the greatest number of  
18 mandatory vaccines (four or more) are all former communist countries where  
19 communist governments traditionally *dictated* medical care - and those  
20 countries all have the worst national health. Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech  
21 Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia.

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23 **Importance of Informed Consent and the Doctor-Patient Relationship:**

24 Public policy in our country and state today is being driven by many  
25 dangerous elements and forces. Of substantial concern are policies, agendas  
26 and legislation being driven by claims of a "national crisis". Crises which  
27 do not exist and are unsupported by reality, fact or science. It's very  
28 dangerous when these claims are driven by the politics of fear mongering,

1 hate and division and used to promote political agendas. This is especially  
2 concerning when specific groups of people are targeted and attacked to incite  
3 fear and to promote misguided and harmful policies.

4 Our country's system of checks and balances is being circumvented and  
5 ignored by those we have placed in positions of authority and accountability.  
6 Intelligent and rational debate have fallen victim to hysteria and the  
7 politics of misinformation and fear. This atmosphere is being fueled by  
8 social media and by sensationalist and divisive news media headlines.  
9 Many who read this may believe this describes our current President and his  
10 attempts to build a border wall with Mexico. Yet our President is not only  
11 one engaging in this. Democrats and those who have labeled themselves as  
12 being "social justice warriors" are equally as guilty of this, especially in  
13 our state.

14 President Trump declared a national emergency about a border wall with  
15 Mexico. A state of emergency and national crisis does in fact exist, but it's  
16 not about a border wall. The national emergency every citizen is being harmed  
17 by is the erosion of fundamental rights caused by unwarranted government  
18 infringements and intrusions into our personal lives. Attacks against  
19 fundamental liberties and personal freedoms guaranteed to all of us by the  
20 Constitution and Bill of Rights. Especially when it comes to the issue of  
21 parental rights.

22 The exact same politics of fear mongering, misinformation, hate and  
23 fear being used by our President to promote his border wall is also being  
24 used by legislators in our state and across the country to promote government  
25 mandated vaccination. This in response to a fake and manufactured crisis  
26 which does not exist, based on dated and misleading facts and misinformation,  
27 and the politics of fear.

1 My family came here from a former communist country. We understand well  
2 what happens when government is allowed to deny individual liberties and  
3 personal freedoms. We know quite well what happens the state considers its  
4 interests to be more important than protecting the rights of its citizens.

5 The scientific benefits of vaccination are not in dispute. However,  
6 concerns regarding vaccine injury, today's vaccine schedule and our  
7 government's much too close relationship with the vaccine industry - should  
8 also not be in dispute. When it is well documented, admitted and scientific  
9 fact that many children have been severely injured or even killed as a result  
10 of adverse vaccine reactions - then government has no right or authority of  
11 any kind to place parents in a situation where our government forces them to  
12 expose their children to admitted risk and risk they deem to be unacceptable.  
13 Our system of modern medicine only works because it was founded on the  
14 concept of doing no harm and importance of informed consent. A person has a  
15 fundamental and protected right to control what happens to their own bodies.  
16 Parents have a fundamental right to the care, custody and control of their  
17 children and their family's medical care. Not the state. Once we hand over  
18 that control - where does it stop?

19 It is curiously hypocritical that many of those who are pro-choice and  
20 against government intrusions into their personal medical decisions and  
21 choices when it comes to the issue of abortion, do not share the same concern  
22 it comes to government forced vaccination and forcing parents to inject their  
23 children with substances they may disagree with or have valid scientific  
24 concerns about.

25 The solution to the vaccine issue is not government mandates and more  
26 draconian government infringement of parental rights and decision making.  
27 If our state and federal governments want people to vaccinate, the solution  
28 is better education and promoting informed consent. It would start promoting

1 full disclosure. By addressing and responding to the valid concerns being  
2 expressed by concerned parents who are asking all of the right and legitimate  
3 questions. The answer is not by engaging in the politics of hate and fear. It  
4 is not found in labeling parents raising these issues as being "crazy",  
5 "uninformed" or worse, to promote a political agenda.

6 A further very serious concern is that the vaccine issue has made the  
7 recent headlines in Democratically controlled states not due to any crisis or  
8 emergency of any kind. A few dozen cases of measles in Washington State or  
9 1,200 parents opting not to vaccinate, or to vaccinate on a limited schedule,  
10 in Connecticut, is not a medical crisis or threat to the national health. It  
11 certainly does not justify sensationalist news media headlines designed to  
12 scare people using words like "Outbreak!"

13 All of us should be very wary. We should all be very concerned that  
14 this (non)issue and non-emergency has been adopted by Democrats as a  
15 collateral attack against the current President given his stance on the issue  
16 and his refusal to accept facts based in science.

17 All of us should be very concerned when certain state legislators and  
18 some members of the Children's Committee are using this issue as a basis and  
19 justification to allow our state to even further infringe upon and ignore  
20 parental rights and parental decision making.

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22 A very dangerous combination indeed.

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24 Respectfully submitted

25 \_\_\_\_\_/s/\_\_\_\_\_

26 Peter T. Szymonik  
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