Chairperson: Representative Liz Linehan

Senators: Abrams, Cohen, Kelly, Moore

Representatives: Boyd, Comey, Cummings, Green, Hampton, Hayes, Kokoruda, Turco, Wilson

Rep. Linehan (103rd): Gentlemen, welcome to the Children's Committee public hearing, the first of a few. Before we begin, I do have some housekeeping to take care of. Please make -- oh, sorry -- in the interest of safety, I would ask you to note the location of and access to the exits in this hearing room. The two doors through which you entered the room are the emergency exits and are marked with exit signs. We do ask that you keep those doors clear in case of an emergency. In the event of an emergency, please walk quickly to the nearest exit. After exiting the room, go straight and exit the building by the main entrance, or follow the exit signs to one of the other exits. Please quickly exit the building and follow any instructions from the Capitol Police. Do not delay, and do not return unless and until you are advised that it is safe to do so. In the event of a lockdown announcement, please remain in the hearing room, stay away from the exit doors, and seek concealment behind desks and chairs until an all clear announcement is heard.

With that information, I also would like to say that we have one of the smallest rooms here today with an extensive list of people to testify. Because of that, we have an overflow room, which is room 2E,
and I believe we are being broadcast in that room
and we will announce three people -- I always say
the on-deck batter and the double on-deck batter,
but I'm a sports person -- so, we will announce the
names so you know when you'll be coming up.

Before we begin, I'd like to take a moment to
address some issues that we've been having within
this committee, and I ask for all of your
cooperation. Recently, it has come to my attention
that testimony submitted has been shared publicly
and for the use of something known as doxing. Now,
I understand, and I hope you all understand, that
testimony you provide today is, in fact, public
testimony and it is searchable on the web. However,
I do ask that everybody be mindful and respectful of
other people's opinions, even if you do not share
them, and that it is, in my opinion, never okay to
utilize private information for the sake of shaming
someone for having that. And I'm sure most of these
people, if not all of you, can agree with me on
that. So, I just ask that you be mindful of that
and be mindful of other people's opinion, and we
wanna have a nice, respectful public hearing.

So, thank you very much. And, with that, I'd like
to ask my co-chair, do you have anything to say?

SENATOR ABRAMS (13TH): I just wanna say thank you
to all of you who have come here today and those of
you who are here to listen as well as those of you
who are here to testify. This is a really important
part of the process of proposing legislation, and so
I really am so excited about the fact that so many
people are interested in being part of that process.
So, thank you very much for being here.
REP. LINEHAN (103RD): And with that, we will begin -- the first three people on deck. We're gonna start with Representative Jack Hennessy, and then we will move on to Commissioner Dorantes, and then Steven Hernandez.

REP. HENNESSY (127TH): Good Afternoon. (Is this on?) Okay. Committee of Children, thank you very much for this opportunity to testify before you today. I am here with Kevin Barry, and we are here to testify against House Bill 7005, and, you know, to respect the limitation of time, I give my time to Kevin. So, take it away, Kevin.

KEVIN BARRY: Thank you very much, Jack. Thanks for letting -- giving me the opportunity to testify today. My name is Kevin Barry. I'm the president of a nonprofit called FirstFreedoms.org. Our mission is to protect the first freedoms listed in the First Amendment. There are five, and freedom of religion is number one. I'm also the author of Vaccine Whistleblower: Exposing Autism Research Fraud at the CDC. I'm a former U.S. attorney, special assistant U.S. attorney in the district of New York, and I'm a United Nations representative for an environmental health organization.

Please oppose HB 7005 in its current form, and please oppose it when and if the language changes to make the bill a direct attack to remove the entire existing religious exemption, which has happened in multiple states in the past and it's happening in seven states right now. Parents who have religious objections to vaccination have valid concerns about legislative creep. Before SB 277 removed religious
freedom in California in 2015, California passed a bill to weaken the religious exemption in 2013. Just last week in New Jersey, a bill which passed out of the Assembly committee in 2018 restricting the religious exemption was amended to totally remove the religious exemption. There is currently a bill in New York to totally remove the religious exemption as well. It stands to reason that the pharmaceutical lobby will try to capture all three markets in the tri-state area during the same legislative session, which would affect 3.5 million people in Connecticut, 20 million people in New York, and 9 million people in New Jersey. The existing religious freedoms are in jeopardy. These are existing religious freedoms in jeopardy for 32 million people in the tri-state area.

As legislators you frequently have to balance competing interests, which HB 7005 there are competing interests. According to Representative Linehan, she's concerned about the burden of a school nurse to look at the identification of a parent to acknowledge that they are the person submitting the religious exemption, which is quite a heavy burden. On the other side of the scale is freedom of religion, the first freedom listed in the First Amendment, the first thing mentioned in the Bill of Rights, and one of the primary motivators for the founders of this country to sail across the Atlantic. So it's school nurses having to look at a driver's license versus the first freedom named in the Bill of Rights. That's what you're weighing.

Thomas Jefferson must be rolling in his grave that states are considering surrendering freedom of religion to corporate interests in this way, while
hiding behind school nurses. Thomas Jefferson wrote his own tombstone, and he mentions three accomplishments: first, author of the Declaration of Independence; second, author of the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom; and third, father of the University of Virginia. The Virginia Statute of Religious Freedoms is the basis for the First Amendment. Jefferson was right that establishing religious freedom in this country was more important than his more minor accomplishments, like being a two-term president, a vice-president, and secretary of state. There is no problem at all with the current religious exemption in Connecticut which needs solving. Please leave it as is.

One thing I do agree with this bill is getting clergy involved, but not to sign the identity of -- of the parent, it's to protect the First Amendment. And, with whatever little time I have left, here's the -- here are the human rights and bioethics standards internationally, passed in 2005 as the Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights unanimously -- 193 countries, including the United States. First principle they mention -- human dignity and human rights, article 3.2, "The interests and welfare of the individual should have priority over the sole interest of science or society." That's the human rights -- that's the human rights standard. [Clapping] And regarding consent, any preventative -- vaccination is preventative -- any preventative diagnostic and therapeutic medical intervention is only to be carried out with the prior free and informed consent of the person concerned based on adequate information. The consent should, where appropriate, be expressed and may be withdrawn by the person
concerned at any time and for any reason without disadvantage or prejudice. One of the reasons can be religious, and it's certainly a prejudice to be kept out of public school. Thank you.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Thank you very much, sir, for your testimony. We appreciate you coming out here today. I have just one question for you. I understand. I hear your concerns, I do, and I just wanna make sure that you understand that this bill actually does not completely eradicate the religious exemption for vaccinations in school-age children. You know that, correct? I just --

KEVIN BARRY: I do know that, and do you pledge that if -- if the language ever changes, or if a bill to fully remove the religious exemption happens that you'll oppose it?

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): I cannot do that because I cannot say yea or nay on any language that I haven't seen. So -- and that's the way I -- I proceed with any legislation. I cannot be for or against anything until I see the final language. But thank you very much for your testimony. Does anyone else have any questions? Representative Hampton.

REP. HAMPTON (16TH): Good afternoon. Thank you, Madam Chairman. Good afternoon, Representative. Good afternoon. So, I'm seeing a lot in the -- your testimony and other testimony about legislative creep. Can you expound on that? What you -- what you folks are --

KEVIN BARRY: Yes, it's exactly what happened in New Jersey. ["Thank you" in background] They passed a bill out of the Assembly in New Jersey last year
where religious exemption was restricted in a similar way to the language -- language here, and they just amended it on the floor January 31st, removing all of that language and just taking away the entire exemption. So, it passed out of committee with very gentle language, and it went to the floor and it all got stripped.

REP. HAMPTON (16TH): Thank you, sir. Thank you, Madam.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Senator.

SENATOR ABRAMS (13TH): Actually, that was my question Mr. Barry. I just wondered what the other states that you referred to had done.

KEVIN BARRY: Well it's --

SENATOR ABRAMS (13TH): So, I appreciate that. Thank you.

KEVIN BARRY: Just can I expound on it? Also, what happened in California --

SENATOR ABRAMS (13TH): Of course.

KEVIN BARRY: What happened in California, first they did that in 2013 -- they weakened it. In 2015, they took away religious freedom from 39 million people and said we'll leave medical alone. The medical relationship between a doctor and a patient, we won't mess with that, and then they did. There's a bill now tryin' to eliminate medical exemptions. And they said in 2015 that the State Board of Health would not -- would not persecute doctors who wrote medical exemptions, and of course they are
persecuting doctors with medical exemptions. So, the idea that removing religious exemptions is not having tremendous consequences is -- is false. It's happening nationwide. It's seven states. Right now, it's New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Maine, Oregon, Washington, and Arizona. You're part of a plan. You're part of an organized effort -- an organized effort ["Yep" in background] to take away religious freedom in the United States.

SENATOR ABRAMS (13TH): I would say that I don't feel part of an organized effort. That was not the intention to take away anybody's religious rights on my part -- simply to change the language to -- for these nurses. But I understand why you might be suspicious of that, certainly from the testimony that you gave. So, thank you very much. I appreciate that.

KEVIN BARRY: Thank you.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Representative Turco.

REP. TURCO (27TH): Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you very much for your testimony on this issue. I wanna talk about the actual language of the bill, not any speculation of what this bill's intent is because my job is to look at what's actually been proposed, at the language, and see if that is necessary for helping the people of Connecticut. So, can you tell me quickly, when it talks about acknowledging this statement, what does an individual have to do that's listed here -- a town clerk, a notary public, at the current time a school nurse -- what do they have to do to acknowledge this statement?
KEVIN BARRY: I think people -- I live in New York, but people coming behind will have a better grasp on that, but I think it's just -- it's just adding an unnecessary burden to existing -- like there's no other form that you submit to a school is signed by a priest, you know. If you're signing a form to go on a field trip, you don't need the monsignor to sign off on it, right? So --

REP. TURCO (27TH): So, this current law now that the statement needs to be acknowledged, so what I'm asking for -- what do they do? They just look at the form and sign it, is that --?

KEVIN BARRY: I think it's like it's a function of a notary. It's just that -- [background talking] it's that it's a -- it's so that it is -- that the person submitting it is the person submitting it.

REP. TURCO (27TH): So, a very easy process. They look at it, they just verify the information, they sign it, it's done, and then you have the exemption. Is that correct?

KEVIN BARRY: I believe that's what -- how -- I would defer to whoever comes next. I don't know. I don't have -- my kids are in New Jersey. I don't know.

REP. TURCO (27TH): Okay, maybe someone could answer that later, unless you happen to know Representative Hennessy.

REP. HENNESSY (127TH): Well, it seems to me that -- that there's not a litmus test that a person has to,
you know, provide or pass in order to get this exemption. They simply have to ask for it and go through the forms of getting the signature, but there is no inter -- interrogative process beyond that as far as I know.

REP. TURCO (27TH): Okay. May I ask a follow-up question, Madam Chair?

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Of course.

REP. TURCO (27TH): So, it seems like it's an easy process. The form is just presented. It's signed. From my understanding of the language of the bill, we're removing school nurses, who have stated -- can't speak for all of them, but there are some that stated that they do not want to take part in acknowledging this statement, and instead we're adding a clergyperson. Now I seem to be getting a lot of emails from people around the state thinking that somehow that is removing their religious freedoms and the exemption here, and that's not what the language has stated, unless I'm reading it incorrectly. You still have the ability to get this statement acknowledged from a judge, a clerk of the court, a town clerk, a notary public, a justice of the peace, or any attorney that has been admitted to the bar. So, there's still lots of options and lots of people that you could go -- someone could go to who could acknowledge this form. That's not being -- you don't have to go to all of 'em either, just one -- and now we're adding a clergyperson. Since it is a religious exemption, that seems to make sense. Just removing the school nurse seems like a very simple thing, and I'm not sure why there's so
many people worried about losing their religious freedom.

I certainly don't want anyone to lose their religious freedom in the state, and I'm not seeing where this bill does that. So, that's where I'm confused. Thank you, Madam Chair.

REP. HENNESSY (127TH): To answer, we're talking about legislative creep. This is a vehicle, and that's what we're concerned. It's a vehicle to address a problem that really isn't there. They don't wanna sign, if they don't wanna be participating in it, they don't have to. There's no rules against that. This is a bill that's addressing a problem that doesn't really exist, but we are concerned that it is a vehicle that's going to be amended on the floor.

KEVIN BARRY: Also, expanding on what he just said, I think you're reading the language very narrowly. You're reading it like with blinders on, not with what's happening in the real world. In the real world, the pharmaceutical lobby is taking away -- taking down jurisdictions by the millions. They took down California, 39 million people. They took down Italy, 60 million people, France, 65 million people, and they have their eyes on Connecticut's 3.5 million people. They have -- that's the agenda. It's coming. I'll meet you here next year and see if I'm right. You know, their -- their goal is to eliminate religious exemptions, and if -- and if you're not interested in taking them away from people, don't come anywhere near the First Amendment, stay away from it.
REP. TURCO (27TH): Thank you.

KEVIN BARRY: Thank you for your questions.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Thank you. Representative Hayes.

REP. HAYES (51ST): Thank you, and thank you for being out here with us. In your opinion, does this bill carry any potential for eroding the separation between church and state?

KEVIN BARRY: I think it adds a potential. From the First Amendment perspective, there's two prohibitions. One is creating a state religion, you cannot -- the Establishment Clause, and the other is Free Exercise. The Free Exercise argument is clear. I think this becomes -- comes dangerously close to establishing a state religion. The idea that vaccines are magic is -- is -- and don't have adverse effects is false. There are so many false things that come out regarding vaccination bearing false witness right and left, a ninth -- a ninth commandment violation. The top -- top line one would be the reasons vaccines have liability protection is they're classified as unavoidably unsafe. That's the legal classification, but they're marketed as safe and effective. So, that's a whopper of a lie, or you could call it bearing false witness, and there's so many of those. And the subject of my book, Dr. William Thompson, he's a CDC researcher, he says they falsified research in a study published in 2014, which diverted the flow of research. So, like there's a lot of -- there's so many dirty things that have been done regarding vaccine safety. There's open questions on -- on
whether or not they're safe and effective. And more than $4 billion dollars has been paid out under Vaccine Injury Compensation Act. The same industry that makes vaccines have paid more than $35 billion dollars in fines in the last 20 years, and medical error is the number three cause of death in the United States. So, there's a lot -- I think establishing a belief system, I think -- which I call vaccinians, they have a -- when Jenner first gave cowpox to people, it's called the Temple of Vaccinia, it's in the British Medical Journal, and it's this belief that vaccines are magic, and they're not. So, that's where I think there's a constitutional issue about whether or not you're establishing a belief system and imposing it on others.

REP. HAYES (51ST): Thank you.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Thank you, Representative. Representative Comey. Oh, I thought you had a question. No? Okay, sorry. I'm just gonna have one followup question. So, within our conversations, we've all noted that this bill actually does not get rid of the religious exemption. I understand your concerns with it, and I'm hearing that. Let's play devil's advocate. Let's say that this does happen, and -- and I know that there's another bill to get rid of the religious exemption that is not before my committee. If that does happen, based upon -- because we are the Committee on Children, and children are our purview -- based on that information, what would the effect be on children if the religious exemption was no longer applicable or open to you?

KEVIN BARRY: What would the effect be on children?
REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Correct, as it pertains to going to school. Because my concern -- you know, I have to look at everything in ripple effects no matter what we do, and if what in your opinion your worst fears of this actually eliminating the religious exemption. As that pertains to children, it would mean that there is no religious exemption, so that they have to be vaccinated to go to school. However, we're not forcing vaccination. There would be -- there's no forced vaccination. There are other options for children to receive their schooling if they're not in a public school setting. Correct?

KEVIN BARRY: Yes, but I think you're buying into the myth of herd immunity and that there's a -- there's a immunity bubble around schools. There aren't. You've got the lunch ladies, the teachers, everybody coming in, like that's not -- you're not -- it's not an accurate portrayal of what would be happening at a school.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): But this exemption that you're speaking of is the religious exemption on allowing children to attend school if they're not vaccinated. So, I just -- I'm trying to get to the very end. If what you're concerned about actually did happen, what are the consequences? So, children would still be able to receive schooling. They would get their constitutional right to education. That would still be there, correct?

KEVIN BARRY: Yeah, the consequences would be you're violating international human rights, you're violating international bioethics standards, you're
violating the First Amendment, little things like that. [Laughing]

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Yes, I was actually talking about what the effects on the schoolchildren would be.

KEVIN BARRY: Well, the children would obviously be influenced by their parents, so the effect is more on the parents and the families, and it's not having an ability to -- to guide their family's spiritual life and their -- and their health.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Like I said, removing the religious exemption, which is -- to be very clear, this is not what this bill does. I am hearing your concerns of legislative creep and that ultimately you think that that is the goal of some people. There is a bill before another committee to do that. That bill will not be in this committee. But, the concern is, right, that children -- we're not holding them down and vaccinating them, it's about the fact that they cannot use the religious exemption. There's still the medical exemption, and so these children, if this happens -- not in this committee but anywhere else -- these children that could not utilize the religious exemption, it's specifically about being able to go to school in the public school setting, right? So, they're still going to be -- they would still, hypothetically, be able to receive their right to an education. Correct? So, ultimately it would just be that these children would have to be home-schooled or go to a private school. Is that correct?

KEVIN BARRY: No, 'cause I don't -- I think private schools, if they're taking -- if they're taking
state money, they have to abide by the state regs, and California also is going after home-schoolers now too. So, it's -- it's what's happening around the country. And please, I'm happy to send you more information on this, and it's happening around the country. It's all -- California is ahead of the game. They did it four years ago, and they keep closing -- they keep closing the vice, right? So, it's very much a danger zone. And what would happen theoretically, I've experienced from my own family. I have three sons. My middle son is autistic and had a bad vaccine reaction, and his younger brother, we know -- his younger brother is not vaccinated to the extent that his older brothers are, and if we did that in our house, we would be making a foolish decision based on the children we made, right? So, what effect would there be on my younger son? It's hard to say, right?

But some of the things -- this is from the cover of my book -- things that are up, like one in six kids in the United States is in special ed, food allergies are off the charts, autism is up 22,000 percent, ADHD -- kids being medicated in preschool, tic disorders, speech delay. You know, so like what's the effect on the kids? The effect on the kids, if you have the type of immune system that overreacts to immune challenges, then perhaps something that's designed to create a minor immune response creates a major one for you. Again, that same child, my youngest child, he did the scratch test for allergies, he's allergic to 39 of the 40 things he's tested for, right -- 39 of 40.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): I understand that you believe that there are -- that there are vaccine injuries,
and I'm sure that that is the case in some instances. That's not my question. My question is simply the effect of the children and their ability to go to school. If we -- if another committee -- once again, this bill is not before this committee, but if something happened where a law was passed in the state of Connecticut which would remove the religious exemption for children to be vaccinated -- not be vaccinated and still go to public school, bottom line, the repercussions would simply be that those children cannot attend public school, but they would still be able to receive their constitutional right to schooling -- to education. Is that correct? That's all I'm tryin' to -- that's all I'm tryin' to get out.

KEVIN BARRY: Actually, no, that's not correct because not all families are in a position to home school, like if they are two working parent families. You're -- again, from the human rights standard, without disadvantage or prejudice. Is being forced into homeschooling -- that's a disadvantage or a prejudice.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Thank you very much for --

KEVIN BARRY: These are people paying property taxes and paying for the school system that they're denied to go to so they're --

REP. HENNESSY (127TH): Can I also throw one other thing in there. It's also fascist. You know, the idea that -- the idea that the state knows better than the individual, that's fascism.
REP. LINEHAN (103RD):  Are there any other questions? Yes, Representative Kokoruda.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): Thank you, Madam Chairman. Sorry for the voice again. I'm sorry I missed part of your testimony. I just wanted to ask you -- you mentioned about people's rights, and I know Representative Hennessy has said it too, 'cause I see both sides. Certainly, we wanna keep all kids safe, and I know it's a concern, especially when children are ill. And, you know, if a child comes unvaccinated to school I can see the concern, but the other side is there. I had a terrible situation this past year with identical twins in my community. They were given identical bundles of vaccinations. One had a terrible reaction to the point where DCF and Yale Hospital had to get involved. That's the dilemma we're up against. These parents did what was right, and now they had a child that for seven months this family was put in crisis over this issue.

So, this is a difficult situation, but I do keep goin' back to parental rights, and I think Representative Hennessy is right. The state of Connecticut's responsibility is to educate the child, and I understand people's -- people being worried, but we've gotta find a way to work this out because every one of us can tell a story of someone we know that it hasn't -- the vaccinations haven't worked the way they're supposed to. And so, it's a dilemma. I think people that are concerned about religious exemption being gone are just worried about where this conversation keeps going very year, and I totally understand. I've heard from more parents, rightfully so, concerned about their child
welfare. So, we try to look at both sides and never exempt one group from being right and one from being wrong. But thank you for your testimony.

KEVIN BARRY: And thank you for your commentary, and for this -- in the situation you just described, for the state to tell that parent that sorry you need to get these 70 vaccines to go to kindergarten, when they've already had that bad experience -- the idea that the state knows better than the parents is absurd. And again, that's why -- this is why the human rights standards are what they are, 'cause the history says when the state compels people what to do, you end up with things like Nuremberg, you end up with things like Tuskegee, you end up -- you end up experimenting on colonial people in Africa. You know, so this -- there's reasons that the -- that the human rights standard is that the individual takes priority over the state.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Thank -- oh --

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): Thank you, just one more thing. You know, I also have a grandson with autism, and I don't personally believe that vaccinations affected him, but I know other people that do believe it of their children. But how worrisome for me to hear this year that we again are seeing thimerosal in our flu vaccinations. We fought for so long to get those -- that preservative -- all that does is to give shelf life to a drug so people can make more money. We put it back in our flu shots this year, and that stuff -- that's how we have to be so vigilant with what's going on with vaccinations, what we're putting in our bodies and our children's bodies.
KEVIN BARRY: It's been back in the flu shot since 2004.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): I wasn't aware of it till this year. I have a bottle home of eye drops. It's over 20 years old -- I apologize, my medicine cabinet's a mess -- but it says on it in big letters, thimerosal free, 20 years ago. And we were putting it -- my 17-year-old grandson had it in his vaccinations. We went back and looked. We were able to get the numbers. We looked, and it was good news when we were assured it was gone, but why don't people know that a preservative is back in a vaccination a lot of us are getting. And so, I'm a little concerned about who's controlling that -- that we're not putting the safety of our children and our families and our people first. Thimerosal for me means one thing -- shelf life, money. It doesn't belong in our bodies. Sorry for the voice. [Applause]

SENATOR ABRAMS (13TH): Thank you very much. In the interest of time, if it's okay, can we -- can we move forward? Would that be --

KEVIN BARRY: Sure.

SENATOR ABRAMS (13TH): Okay. Thank you. I appreciate very much your testimony, and thank you for coming Mr. Barry.

KEVIN BARRY: Thank you very much. And if Rep. -- I know she's out of the room, but I was reading up on her yesterday, and I know she championed a bill
educating police about dealing with adults with autism.

SENATOR ABRAMS (13TH): Yeah.

KEVIN BARRY: And I have a 21-year-old son with autism, so I very much appreciate that.

SENATOR ABRAMS (13TH): Excellent. I'll let her know. Thank you very much.

KEVIN BARRY: Thank you. Thank you. [Crosstalk]

SENATOR ABRAMS (13TH): Next I'd like to welcome our new DCF commissioner, Ms. Dorantes. Thank you very much for being here. I appreciate it.

VANNESSA DORANTES: Thank you very much. Good afternoon, Senator Abrams.

SENATOR ABRAMS (13TH): Oh, I'm sorry. [Background talking] Oh, it was just left there. Okay. Thank you. [Laughing]

VANNESSA DORANTES: Representative Linehan, Senator Kelly, Representative Green, I'm Vannessa Dorantes, Commissioner-Designate for the Department of Children and Families. Thank you for the opportunity to offer my thoughts regarding four bills on today's agenda.

The first bill I would like to address are Senate Bill 97, AN ACT CONCERNING CHILDREN'S SAFETY; House Bill 6999, AN ACT CONCERNING CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS; and House Bill 7000, AN ACT CONCERNING CHILDREN'S
SERVICES. Since these bills are related, I thought it would be expedient to address them all together.

The three bills require the Department of Children and Families to study programs, services, policies and procedures administered by the department and report our findings to the Committee on Children early next year. The department is committed to being transparent and forging a partnership with policymakers. In fact, I believe the only way to achieve policy that results in positive outcomes is by sharing our experiences, successes, and failures with the legislature and other state agencies.

Under current law, DCF is responsible for producing approximately 35 reports every year. These publications cover a wide variety of topics, and many of them overlap. We issue various reports summarizing programs we provide to the children we serve, and review the behavioral health services administered by the department in nine distinct reports, a cross-reference data concerning animal cruelty and child abuse, neglect, and others to name a few. It is noteworthy that the department's Division on Quality and Planning and the Office of Research and Evaluation continuously reviews DCF's programs, contracts to ensure that they both programmatically and fiscally beneficial. In addition, all of our RBA report cards are available on the DCF website. The state is also fortunate to have a robust advocate community to analyze and report on our operations independently.

When three bills like these are offered by committee, it is apparent that the numerous reports we're obligated to provide have not provided this
legislative body with the information that it needs. Our goal is to provide the relevant information in a concise, easy-to-access format. With that in mind, I suggest we review each of the reports that we are currently required to submit and determine the best way that we can present the data to committee and other interested parties.

I believe that one annual report that contains all of the information that the legislature -- would be most efficient and reliable means of presenting this information. I look forward to your guidance on what data is most helpful in achieving our shared goal of developing the best possible policies to protect the children of our state, and I'm ready to partner with you to fully understand your needs and commitment to using department's resources to provide this information in a format that is readily available and accessible.

The last bill I would like to discuss is House Bill 7001, AN ACT CONCERNING THE NOTIFICATION OF CERTAIN EMPLOYERS OF THE PLACEMENT OF AN EMPLOYEE OF A CHILD -- ON THE CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT REGISTRY. The bill requires the Department of Children and Families to make a reasonable effort to notify the employer of a person placed on the state's Child Abuse and Neglect Registry if the person's employment requires direct contact with children, and such a finding has been upheld after appeal. Under current law, DCF is already required to notify a number of specific entities and state agencies when a person is placed on a registry or an investigation is begun. They are listed in the written testimony.
It should be noted that in House Bill 7001, it does not mandate the disclosure of employment information by individuals placed on the Child Abuse or Neglect Registry, and DCF does not otherwise collect this information in a uniform manner. Approximately 1,200 individuals each year have their placement on the registry upheld following an appeal. The department thanks the committee for consideration of this testimony.

SENATOR ABRAMS (13TH): Thank you very much, Commissioner, and I very much appreciate your remarks about transparency and working together in the best interest of the children of our state. So, I look forward to that opportunity with you.

VANNESSA DORANTES: Likewise, thank you.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Thank you, Commissioner, for your testimony. I very much appreciate it, and I -- I echo my co-chair's sentiments that we are just thrilled that you are ready to be open and transparent, and I look forward to a fantastic working relationship between the committee and your department. So, thank you very much. I do have some followup questions for you.

So, regarding 7001, it was noted to us, I think back in 2017, that the language actually doesn't allow for conversation between the department -- the language of the current law -- doesn't allow for that conversation between the department and someone in a position where they are in direct contact with children unless they are their primary employer. Is that actually not correct?
VANNESSA DORANTES: I'd have to look really specifically at the nuanced nature of that particular policy, but from what I understand, it's based on first that the person has disclosed to us who that employer are. There's certain pieces that, of course, by way of how the referral comes to us, we know who that employer is, and then the notification comes at the point of substantiation and then the period of appeal, but not uniformly would we know who the employer is.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): And so, in hearing your testimony, I feel as though you've -- you've kind of found the fatal flaw. And so, with that, if we mandated that the department then needs to find out where they work and all of their places of employment, would you support that?

VANNESSA DORANTES: I believe there's opportunity to look at this a little bit more closely to determine if that would indeed satisfy all of the concerns that we would have with the wording.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): I appreciate that. This is something that has been very near and dear to my heart. I think we are charged as a committee, the same as you are charged as a department, to ensure the health and safety of our children in the state of Connecticut. So, I welcome any conversation with you on how we can get to that end. Specifically, with this, I think that it's going to require us working together a lot. So, I apologize in advance, you're gonna see a lot of us.

VANNESSA DORANTES: Likewise.
REP. LINEHAN (103RD): [Laughing] Well, I think it's going okay. ["Okay" in background] So, I would ask to charge you with looking at what's been happening in the past. When this idea first came about a few years ago, the question was, well exactly how many people would this affect? And so, we've been working diligently to find things but without actual -- actually having any numbers. With you at the helm, I think perhaps we can get to that and find that conversation. So, if we can agree then to meet and talk about how we can reach the ends that we're both looking for and make sure that it's not too much of a burden on the department, because I do recognize there's a lot of work for you to be done, but this is something that as a committee we've been working on for a few years. So, I appreciate you coming to the table and helping us flesh this out.

VANNESSA DORANTES: I look forward to the opportunity to continue the dialogue.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Thank you. Are there any questions from the committee? Seeing none. Is there anything else you'd like to say Commissioner?

VANNESSA DORANTES: Thank you.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Can I call you -- can I officially call you Commissioner now?

VANNESSA DORANTES: No, I believe there's still a full House vote that has to occur.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Oh, that's right, that's right. Well -- well, I look forward to that vote, so thank you. [Crosstalk]
VANNESIA DORANTES: I'll bill the work that I do from day one. [Laughing] Thank you.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Mr. Steven Hernandez.

STEVEN HERNANDEZ: Good afternoon. Good afternoon everyone. My name is Steven Hernandez. I'm the executive director of the legislature's Commissions on Women, Children, and Seniors, and Equity and Opportunity. Senator Daugherty, Representative Linehan, ranking and other distinguished members, I thank you for the opportunity to comment and testify on several of the bills before you -- several of the good bills before you today. I'd like to focus on a couple of them in my -- in my spoken testimony, and then you can -- I would welcome any questions from you. One of them --

SENATOR ABRAMS (13TH): Excuse me. I apologize for interrupting, but I just wanna let the people that just came in know that we have overflow in room 2E, and they will be broadcasting the hearing there. We have to be careful about keeping the number of people in this room within our limits, and the doors closed, and easy access out in case of an emergency. So, I'd ask you to go up to room 2E. Thank you very much.

UNKNOWN: The people in 2E said to come here.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): It's fine. Thank you. ["Your welcome" in background]

STEVEN HERNANDEZ: That's quite all right. As it -- as far as Raised House Bill 7001, THE NOTIFICATION OF CERTAIN EMPLOYERS OF THE PLACEMENT OF AN EMPLOYEE ON THE CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT REGISTRY, we generally support that. We think that it's important that we have communication with our employers that -- especially employers that employ child-facing employees. I think it's critical that we have partnerships with our employees in order to protect kids. I would just nuance that by saying that there's been some work done in our reentry work and our recidivism work where there have been suggestions that we disaggregate low and I would say no-risk from high-risk offenders -- really disaggregate between the two, so that we can really target the offenders that are most likely or even likely to recidivate when it comes to a crime against a child. So, that would be my only nuance there.

My -- secondly, AN ACT PROHIBITING THE INCLUSION OF CERTAIN BEVERAGES ON CHILDREN'S MENUS, you know, this is -- I see that it's part of a -- of an overall public health strategy for families to have as many options as they can when trying to provide the healthiest options for their kids. I also like the fact, you know, some -- we think of the concept of the attractive nuisance when it come to children, and you know, when a -- when a child sees something sugary and delicious on a menu, I think even I would want to order that. So, it's -- I think it's a good idea overall.

Thirdly, I wanna read my testimony on AN ACT PROHIBITING THE SALE OF ENERGY DRINKS TO PERSONS UNDER THE AGE OF 16. You know, consumer information
and the best information in the hands of the consumer is really critical here, so that the consumer can actually make informed decisions about what is -- what is good for them and what is not good for them. You know, children, especially kids under the age of 16, sometimes have a -- have a lesser informed perspective on what it is that's safe for them or what's harmful. Caffeine has been shown, based on research, that especially in high quantities and concentrations, to be -- to be adversely -- to have adverse effects on children, especially developing children. So, we definitely support -- we support the concept of keeping certain things away from kids of a certain age.

And then finally, my perennial testimony on the concussion bill -- on your concussion proposal. You know, this is -- it's an interesting proposal, and there are two aspects to it. One, the requirement that coaches be trained in the -- in the science of concussions of identifying and also perhaps intervening immediately in -- when the signs of concussion appear. The CDC does offer a short training that is free and available on line for anyone who is interested in ensuring that they can see the signs when there's a -- when there's an injury. My intern actually took the concussion -- the concussion test over the internet yesterday, as she was helping me think through some of these issues.

There's a -- there is a nuance here that I really wanted to point out, and that's the liability protection. As -- as the bill is currently drafted, the liability protection would -- would occur when -- for a coach who did not take the test. We would
recommend that the liability protection, as in most Good Samaritan laws, be extended to the coach that did take the test and acted according to best -- acted accorded to the instructions in the test, acted in good faith and without -- without gross negligence. And that's critical because, you know, liability protection is something that is -- that is -- that is really a tool in the law to protect people and to encourage people to step in when they have been trained and when they are -- when they are prepared to really do the best thing on behalf of children in an emergency. So, I think that it's an important protection that we should have, but it should be a protection that we -- that we extend for when -- for when good action is done and not in the absence of good and best practice action. So, I would love to work with you on that language if you would -- if you would like my help.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): And does that conclude your testimony?

STEVEN HERNANDEZ: Yes, it does. Thank you very much. I appreciate it.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Thank you very much, Mr. Hernandez. I will say, the work that you do is incredible, and -- and I always look forward to your input. I do have a few followup questions, if you don't mind, and then we'll open it up to my co-chair and the rest of the committee.

First of all, regarding the 7001, when we talk about -- I'm sorry, was that it, yes -- the Abuse and Neglect Registry, you're talking about taking the most egregious offenders, right? So -- and the
commissioner is not -- is no longer here, but the
question is, are you familiar with the registry and
is there already a scoring system in place?

STEVEN HERNANDEZ: I'm moderately familiar with the
registry. I know that very recently there was a
task force that -- that addressed some of the
questions of [crying in background] -- of being able
to nuance different offenses, one from the other. I
don't know whether they've been able to do so in a
way that would be instructive or useful, but I would
be happy to yield to an expert if an expert were
close.
REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Stay close. So, would you
mind?

VANNESAA DORANTES: I just wanna make sure I
understand the question. The question has to do
with whether or not people that are placed on the
registry have a degree to which the substantiation
or not.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): For recidivism.

VANNESAA DORANTES: For recidivism?

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Yes.

VANNESAA DORANTES: Well, the placement on the
registry takes into account three different things.
The chronicity, the intensity of it, and the
likelihood of future abuse and neglect, and those
are the three areas that a person would have to make
a distinction on when they determine someone is on
the registry. So, we also have tools called
structured decision making that help us determine
safety and risk factors. So, when you think about the range at which someone might find themselves on the Abuse or Neglect Registry, it may be difficult to kind of quantify who would be more likely, but we would certainly be able to have information to suggest whether or not the risk or safety issues register high on that particular scale.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): And in terms of ease of use, right, so is that at your fingertips, so that information if it pops up -- I don't know, in my mind, I see it as a scoring system. Is that what it is?

VANNESSA DORANTES: It is, and our Child Abuse and Neglect Information System is currently being updated. And so, some of the things that we are thinking about as we hear this testimony is is there an opportunity to include that in the upgrade of the system to be able to determine if that's something that we could filter out relatively quickly.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): And when do you anticipate that upgrade?

VANNESSA DORANTES: It's occurring.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): It's occurring, and is it a rolling upgrade?

VANNESSA DORANTES: Yes. It's actually a -- the way that this has been designed is that each piece of it will be stood up so we're not having to wait for the completion of the whole product, but that as each piece stands up, we'll be able to kind of cumulatively add.
REP. LINEHAN (103RD): And each piece meaning the Abuse and Neglect Registry will be one piece. It's not you will have a third of that done and then two-thirds.

VANNESSA DORANTES: No, no.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Okay.

VANNESSA DORANTES: Yeah, so each section has been -- like so the care line has one section, then the other. You know, so it's systematically being kind of rolled out.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): So, as we move forward, as we discuss this with my co-chair and with the committee membership, if we decide then to utilize that, would you be able to give us a date in which we can make the passage of this bill as effective in order to coincide with your ability to have that part of it completely updated?

VANNESSA DORANTES: This may be something that we can gather ahead of the completion of the whole technology piece. I was offering that as an opportunity to inform the design of that, but the SDM data is already collected.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Excellent. Thank you very much. I appreciate your help. And then, Mr. Hernandez, I have just one more question. Thank you so much. Regarding the bill -- I don't have the number in front of me -- regarding the sale of energy drinks to minors. So, you had stated that you support this, and do you think in your -- in
your expert findings here (you've been doing this for quite some time) -- the age on this bill is 16, do you think that that is an appropriate age?

STEVEN HERNANDEZ: Well, you know, all the best science tells us that the brain stops developing at the age of 25. So, you know -- so, but 16, below the age of 16 really is where most of the effects are experienced from caffeine specifically. And I think what we found, and it's in my -- some of the nuances in my testimony, but it's really the levels of caffeine at a critical time of development, especially around puberty, that it's really critical.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): And I'm putting you a little bit on the spot --

STEVEN HERNANDEZ: That's quite all right.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): If a child ingests these energy drinks before the age of 16, during the critical development of adolescence, are there long-term effects reaching into adulthood?

STEVEN HERNANDEZ: Well, you know, some of the effects that have been listed here are effects on energy overall, attention deficit, and other long-term impacts that really do go into adulthood, that's right.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Excellent. I appreciate your testimony. Thank you, and does my co-chair have any questions? Are there any questions from the membership? Ah, yes, Representative Hayes.
REP. HAYES (51ST): Thank you. I have to assume that you're pretty familiar with this bill as it's written, and I'm referring to the one about the energy drinks. Okay.

STEVEN HERNANDEZ: Yes.

REP. HAYES (51ST): Is it --

STEVEN HERNANDEZ: I don't have it in front of me, but I do --

REP. HAYES (51ST): Okay, as you see it, was it the intent to stop energy drinks from being sold to anyone under 16?

STEVEN HERNANDEZ: From how I read it, yes -- from being sold, yes, or provided.

REP. HAYES (51ST): And I guess my concern would be the way I'm reading it, when you start on line 35, and I apologize you don't have the bill -- would it be illegal for me, as a parent, to give an energy drink to my child that's under 16?

STEVEN HERNANDEZ: Not the way that I'm reading it, no. And if that's -- the intent should be made very clear that that's not what we're -- what we're requiring because a parent should, of course, have the prerogative.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Yeah, for the benefit of the good representative and for the rest of the committee here, the intent of this bill is not to ban the use and consumption of energy drinks to children under the age of 16, it's the sale. We are
-- this bill is -- and we can clean up that language and make sure that it is very clear in that, but a parent would still have the right to decide if they would like to purchase this for the -- for their child or allow them to consume it. It's simply the purchase for someone under 16. It's almost hoping that we ensure that there's parental guidance.

REP. HAYES (51ST): Thank you.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Representative Kokoruda.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): Thank you Madam Chair. Nice to see you.

STEVEN HERNANDEZ: Nice to see you.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): I guess I should be asking a scientist this, but if a child -- when I walk into my local Starbucks or coffee shop, half the people in the -- in the room build business for teenagers. Do energy drinks have more caffeine than a cup of coffee?

STEVEN HERNANDEZ: Yeah, they do, and that's -- that's really the threshold there -- is the amount of caffeine and other substances that are in energy drinks really far exceeds the amount that you would find in a normal cup of coffee.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Any other questions? We thank you very much for your testimony.

STEVEN HERNANDEZ: I wanna thank this committee, and I also wanna thank the commissioner -- the future, hopefully, commissioner of the Department of
Children and Families. We really look forward to working with that department under this new leadership.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Thank you so very much. Senator Kissel, and then after that we go to Representative Dauphinais. [Crosstalk]

SENATOR KISSEL (7TH): Good afternoon, Chairman Linehan, Chairman Abrams, and for what it's worth, I served with your husband, the Honorable Jim Abrams back in the day, and Ranking Member Green, esteemed members of the Committee on Children. It's great to be here before you, having been vice-chair for the last two years, but I'm here explicitly for my constituent, Melissa Sullivan, who's here to testify, and I yield the rest of my time to her in the interest of moving matters along this afternoon.

MELISSA SULLIVAN: Thank you, Senator Kissel. Thank you committee members and Madam Chairs for the ability to testify against -- in opposition to HB 7005. My name is Melissa Sullivan. I am a parent. I am also formerly executive vice-president for Health Choice Connecticut, and I am the state director for NVIC, which is the National Vaccine Information Center. My testimony today is basically going to be about our current statute. The way our current statute is listed right now, there's really no problem with it. We, you know, have a very low amount of religious exemptions here in Connecticut, but it's very important for me to tell you that the way things are and the way our statute reads right now, acknowledging a signature by the current people that can acknowledge it, is just that.
Kevin Barry was correct when he said that it's just a -- it's just that school nurse or anybody else that's on that list saying they know who Melissa Sullivan is. They're actually supposed to check my ID based on 32-1, 34-1, and 35-1, which is in the statute, and that's all they're doing. So, if our school nurses are having a problem with that, which is what I hear you saying Representative Linehan, and you and I have talked at length about this -- you know, if that's the problem, they need to be educated.

First, they need to know that they can say no. We're okay with them saying no. We have other people to go ahead and sign that exemption for us. So, they need to be educated about that. But it does make sense for them to sign it. They are the keepers of everything medical for our children. They know the HIPAA laws. They know the FERPA laws, when we're talking about special education because there are FERPA laws that come into play here. So, it does make sense to keep our school nurses on there. I understand they might feel uncomfortable, but in no way, shape, or form are they saying, yes, I believe Melissa Sullivan is religious and she is, you know, taking this religious exemption because of her religious beliefs, which leads me to the religion part of this.

Religious beliefs -- that's just what they are, they're beliefs. There doesn't have to be an organized church, although there are several organized churches that are against vaccines. Therefore, by adding a clergy, you're really infringing on the privacy rights of parishioners in any given church. If a clergy were to sign our
religious exemption, what is the state going to do then? Are you gonna contact that clergy member? Are you gonna contact that church? This is legislative creep. We've talked about this, Representative Linehan. You and I, you know, we go back a while. [Ringing] I know, that's my time.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Thank you very much.

MELISSA SULLIVAN: Madam Chairman, you're right, I'm sorry. [Laughing]

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): That's okay. We've known each other a while.

MELISSA SULLIVAN: Yes, I call you Liz actually.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): And do you -- do you still reside in the best district in Connecticut?

MELISSA SULLIVAN: I do.


REP. TURCO (27TH): Thank you, Madam Chair. Senator, thank you very much for being here. Thank you for your testimony. I keep -- and I've been getting a lot of emails even sitting here regarding -- seems to be a lot of people upset with adding a clergy member to this, as somebody that could sign this paper. There seems to be added complication. I think the original intent was if we're removing a school nurse, why not add a clergyperson since it's a religious exemption. But if there seems to be an
issue with that, would you be opposed to just not adding the clergyperson but still removing the nurse? Because if school nurses don't want to do this, why put 'em -- and like you mentioned, they're not mandated to do that, but they feel uncomfortable. They're the person that's interacting with that parent on a regular basis throughout the school year. They work right there in the school. They're with the children every day. So, if they feel uncomfortable, and they wanna be able just to do their job without this issue, we'll just remove them and not add the clergyperson and just leave the language at that. Would you be supportive of that, and the issue could be put to rest? Thank you.

MELISSA SULLIVAN: So, I have read on Facebook that Madam Chairperson Linehan has said that that is her intent, and that's what she would do with this bill at the end of the day. I don't believe that we should remove the school nurse, for reasons I've already stated really, because they are the keeper of all things medical, and if they're just having to sign this -- again, it's not insinuating that they are believing a parent. It's just acknowledging that that parent is who they say they are. So, I'm supposed to present that to my school nurse. I'm supposed to show her my ID, as if she doesn't know me, but if she doesn't, and she's supposed to sign it. It's really that simple.

So, there's -- this isn't broke. We don't need to fix it. We're -- we're, you know, infringing on religious freedoms for no good reason here. We have 1,255 kids taking a religious exemption in this state. We have 98.7 percent of our children that
are fully vaccinated. There's no crisis here. We don't need to have these, you know, conversations. We're good. We've got two cases of the measles. Measles -- it's a benign childhood illness, and I'm using the word illness because it's not a disease. Most of the people in this room, and if I were to take a poll on how many of you were vaccinated and had the MMR vaccine. Please raise your hand. There aren't too many. Yes, Representative Linehan, I am so not surprised. [Laughing] I say that with so much respect, but yeah, I mean, there aren't too many people.

So, when you're talking about, you know, where is the danger -- why are we looking at this? Why is the state wasting its time? Why do we all have to come out here today and talk about this? There's 1,255 people. It looks like a witch hunt quite frankly, you know. And I don't want to divulge my religion, just like Representative Linehan doesn't wanna divulge her religion. You know, I know you probably know this is comin', but we found something online that you wrote, and it was really interesting because it was a biography on Vote Smart, I believe. You filled in the information. One of the questions was your religion, and, you know, you clearly stated that you didn't wanna answer that question because of the separation of church and state and because that's what you believed in. And honestly, that's what we believe in too, Representative -- Madam Chairman -- that's what we believe in. We believe in church -- you know, the divide of church and state too. So, there's no real need (oh, they can hear me, I'm not quiet -- thank you). There's no real need. So, I know that was a long-winded
answer. I hope that answered your question. Thank you for the question.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Are you through. Thank you very much. Are there any other questions? Okay. Thank you very much. We appreciate your time.

MELISSA SULLIVAN: Thank you for the opportunity. [Applause]

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Excuse me, ladies and gentlemen. We ask that you not applaud. You can actually nod, you can show your approval, but we ask that we keep the committee room quiet enough so everybody can be heard. Thank you. [Crosstalk] Thank you very much. If the clerk would go and --

With that testimony, we have arrived at five minutes after two, which means that the first hour of officials has been used up, and we're now going to bounce back-and-forth between officials and the public. Representative Dauphinais, I apologize that we're gonna have to bump you one more time, just because we have some members of the public, and we will have you immediately after them. And with that, I would like to ask the students of the City Hill Middle School to come and testify please.

Pardon me, Mrs. Sullivan, would you be kind enough to show our kids how to turn the mics on and off. I appreciate that. Thank you so much.

MELISSA SULLIVAN: It does look like they're on. No, this one's not.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Best little district in Connecticut. Thank you. [Background talking]
SENATOR ABRAMS (13TH): Welcome. Thank you so much. I appreciate that two of you look to speak, but I'd like to give an opportunity for everyone to introduce themselves if we could. So, would you like to just go speak into the microphone and introduce yourself please.

SEAN DAVINO: I am Sean Davino.
CIANA CHIRKOUT: I'm Ciana Chirkout.

LUKE DEITELBAUM: I'm Luke Deitelbaum.

AMY MORRISSEY: My name is Amy Morrissey.

SAHIRA RIVERA: My name is Sahira Rivera.

EMILY FINE: And I'm Emily Fine.


LUKE DEITELBAUM: Representative Linehan, Senator Abrams, Vice-Chairs, Ranking members, and members of the Committee of Children. We welcome -- we come before you today in support of HB No. 7007, AN ACT PROHIBITING THE SALE OF ENERGY DRINKS TO PERSONS UNDER THE AGE OF 16 FROM PURCHASING ENERGY DRINKS. On behalf of myself, Luke Deitelbaum, my classmates here today, Amy Morrissey, Sean Davino, Sahira Rivera, Emily Fine, and Ciana Chirkout as well as our 344 seventh-grade classmates at City Hill Middle School in Naugatuck, we thank you for allowing us this opportunity to come here today.
In science class, we completed a project which addressed the question, should energy drinks be banned for kids under the age of 16. We addressed this question by doing extensive research on the chemistry of energy drinks and their effects on the human body. We used this information to decide whether or not to support this potential bill. After choosing a position, every student made a presentation on their point-of-view with evidence from our research to support it. Our six presentations were chosen as the best presentations, and we were rewarded with the opportunity to work with Representative Liz Linehan to create this bill and testify before your committee today. Since then, we have spent many hours carefully contemplating how to best go about preventing our peers from being exposed to the evils of energy drinks.

While doing this project, we discovered that energy drinks can be fatal to everyone, but especially to adolescents. Even though this is true, most energy drink companies continue to market these drinks specifically towards teens because they are their main consumers. This upsets us greatly, and it is why we feel it is extremely important to speak up in support of this bill. This startling information inspired us to get involved in this process. The top harmful ingredients in these -- in these drinks are sugar, carbohydrates, and synthetic caffeine, which is conveniently hidden under the term energy blend. When too much sugar is consumed, your blood glucose levels rise, which can lead to numerous external and internal problems.
Carbohydrates can also be bad for your body. [Background noise] When too many carbohydrates are consumed, they can lead to obesity, heart disease, and type-2 diabetes. Childhood obesity is already a major concern in our country, and this only adds to the problem.

And last, but never least, the side effects of synthetic caffeine -- caffeine that is made in a lab or not natural -- are absolutely frightening and life-threatening. We have attached a more specific list of ingredients and their harmful effects to our testimony letter for you to consider when making your decision. What is even more startling is the fact that these companies are telling us that these energy drinks are safe and some even healthy. Yet, information we found based on actual statistics tells us a much different story.

There have been a myriad of deaths and hospitalizations due to energy drinks in the past 15 years. In 2011, there were 20,783 reported emergency room visits in which energy drinks were the primary cause of or contributing factors to health problems. Not only have there been hospitalizations but also many deaths associated with these detrimental drinks. It's bad enough that it happens to adults, but even more concerning when it happens to children.

In May 2011, researchers from the American Academy of Pediatrics said energy drinks are never appropriate for children and adolescents, saying caffeine in children has been linked to harmful effects on their developing neurologic and cardiovascular systems. Sixteen-year-old Lanna
Hamman is just one example. She died on June 14, 2014, in Mexico, while on vacation, after consuming multiple Red Bull energy drinks. She is not the only one. Fourteen-year-old Anais Fournier of Hagerstown, Maryland, died on December 12, 2012, after she went into a cardiac arrest after drinking two 24-ounce Monster beverages within a 24-hour period. An autopsy found that Fournier died of cardiac arrhythmia due to caffeine toxicity that impeded her heart's ability to pump blood.

We feel that it's clear from our evidence that consuming these drinks puts the lives of children at risk. Children and their families are being severely affected and dying because of the toxic ingredients in energy drinks. Most people don't even know the awful effects that energy drinks have on the body. These effects are magnified when it comes to children, whose bodies cannot handle the same levels of harmful ingredients as adults. If you approve our bill, it will ensure that society will be more aware and will help protect children from being exposed to their health dangers.

Every year, innocent kids die from energy drinks, and for what purpose? These drinks can be -- these deaths can be easily prevented if we take action. It is for these reasons we strongly believe that you -- that the committee and Connecticut lawmakers should pass HB No. 7007. We rely on your committee to keep us and our peers safe and hope that you take into consideration all the information we have provided you with today. Help us protect the children of Connecticut by banning the sale of energy drinks to children under the age of 16. Thank you for this opportunity to testify before you
today. We are happy to take any questions that you may have. [Applause]

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Okay, this time I'll allow some applause. [Applause] So, I've had goosebumps for the past four or five minutes listening to you because I know how much work you put into this. You all did a fantastic job, and I -- and I believe that your testimony in some ways is more comprehensive than many of the testimony that we received from some experts. So, I wanna say thank you very much. I do -- I do have some questions.

First of all, I want you to know, you testified that the American Academy of Pediatrics said that energy drinks, "are never appropriate for children and adolescents." Before I ask a question, I want you to know that the American Academy of Pediatrics has also put testimony into the record. They are supporting this bill wholeheartedly. I thought you should know that.

Secondly, something that I found to be really interesting, and I consider myself a bit of a science buff, and I always read labels and I always look at everything; however, some of the things that you have in the evidence to support your testimony was really -- it really hit home. We talk about energy drinks and caffeine, but your testimony -- and I just wanna get this on the record -- your testimony also includes a bunch of ingredients that are common in energy drinks that have rapid heartbeat, increased blood pressure, feelings of burning or tingling, irregular heart rhythm, we have cardiovascular issues -- by the way, each thing that I'm reading is a symptom -- is a side effect of a
different ingredient -- insomnia, we have again high blood pressure, nervousness and restlessness, difficulty sleeping, dizziness and tiredness. These all seem to be the same effects within different ingredients. Based on your research and what you've put together, would you agree with me when I say that each ingredient listed that have these side effects will compound those side effects and make it even worse for you -- that when energy drinks are consumed, those things taken all together are worse than just caffeine?

UNKNOWN: Yeah, I definitely -- well we all definitely feel like when all those ingredients are put together, the bad effects of those ingredients are magnified and that causes even more harm to the human body.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Seeing that you've done all this research, you've also become some advocates in your community regarding this. In addition to this legislation, do you have anything -- any ideas on how you can get this information to members of your community regarding the dangers of energy drinks.

UNKNOWN: Yes, we've actually started to draft a pamphlet that we are hoping to give to doctors' offices, both locally and then hopefully on a larger scale eventually, for them to hand out to their patients to inform them of the harmful effects of consuming energy drinks.

SENATOR ABRAMS (13TH): Good afternoon. I am a retired teacher and high school administrator, so I think you have made my week, if not my month. I would also like to tell you that I worked at one point with your superintendent, Dr. Locke, and went to school with your assistant superintendent, Dr. Montini, and I cannot wait to reach out to both of them to tell them what an incredible job you did today and how proud your community must be of everything that you've done. And I look forward to the day when you are sitting here, and I can testify in front of you. So, I think that might be in your future.

STUDENTS: Thank you. Thank you so much.

SENATOR ABRAMS (13TH): You did a wonderful job, and I am also the Chair of Public Health, so I find this whole line very interesting because it's not just about children, but I think the idea that you educate the community on the dangers of these drinks is very important. So, I applaud you for taking it the step further, and I can't thank you enough for being here.

STUDENTS: Thank you.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Representative Kokoruda.
REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): Thank you, Madam Chairman. Well, we'd heard from Representative Linehan that you were gonna wow us, and you did -- you were wonderful. And then I just couldn't ask you any tough questions 'cause I just got a text from Representative Rebimbas that I better be nice. [Laughing] So, I always listen to Representative Linehan, but now I'm really in trouble. You did a
great job. Congratulations. I love the fact that the school, the class has gotten so involved with what happens up here and how bills get -- get made and how we try to do good things for everybody in the state. You did a great job. Thank you. Thank you.

STUDENTS: Thank you.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Any other questions? With that, we thank you very much.

STUDENTS: Thank you.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): We call up Representative Dauphinais, and our on-deck would be Julie Lemay and then Representative Kupchick. [Crosstalk] Go ahead, sorry about that, Senator.

REP. DAUPHINAIS (44TH): Co-Chair Senator Abrams, Representative Linehan, Ranking Members Senator Kelly and Representative Green, and distinguished committee members, thank you for allowing me to come and speak to you. I'm here today to testify in opposition of HB 7005, AN ACT PROHIBITING THE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF PARENTAL STATEMENTS CONCERNING RELIGIOUS OBJECTIONS (excuse me) TO THE VACCINATION BY SCHOOL NURSES AND PERMITTING MEMBERS OF THE CLERGY TO ACKNOWLEDGE SUCH STATEMENTS.

My professional experience includes more than 35 years in nursing, where I serviced in various capacities, including acute-care hospital care, patient care clinics, pharmaceutical adviser and representative, private home care, skilled nursing care facility, camp and school nurse. In the
nursing role, we are required to follow HIPAA laws, and for those of you that don't know, those are laws that protect patients against the, if you will, disclosure of their medical records or any medical information that's in those. Nurses, in general, requires receiving, reviewing, and filing dozens of documents, which include medical, surgical, and liability releases, physicals, food and allergy notifications, medication authorizations, insurance documents, diagnostic lab tests, vaccination records, and medication documents. The nurse's responsibility under the law is to protect the confidential information of the patient.

Based on my experience in the roles that I mentioned, I strongly believe that Public Act 15-174, REQUIREMENT FOR THE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF PARENTAL STATEMENTS CONCERNING RELIGIOUS OBJECTIONS TO VACCINATIONS, is discriminatory in nature, especially when considering that this requirement does not apply to many other signatures required in school settings, such as some listed medication authorization, field trips and early dismissals, and others.

HB 7005 would add to this requirement and prohibit the nurse from acknowledging those religious exemptions -- objections, excuse me. I am strongly opposed to this language in HB 7005 that would infringe on the protection of students' privacy under HIPAA laws, removing the only signature under which confidentiality is guaranteed. In conclusion, I would ask this committee to rescind Public Act 15-174 and oppose HB 7005. Thank you.
REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Thank you very much, Representative. Do you have any questions, Madam Co-Chair?

SENATOR ABRAMS (13TH): No, thank you.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Are there any questions from the committee? Thank you very much. We appreciate your time.

REP. DAUPHINAIS (44TH): Thank you.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): As we move into the public portion of this testimony -- this hearing, excuse me, I would like to ask that everyone that we call up would please state their name and the town in which they reside, and I'd like to call up please Julie Lemay. Ms. Lemay, thank you for being here today.

JULIE LEMAY: Thank you for having me. Chairmen Abrams and Linehan, Senator Kelly, Representative Green, and members of the Children's Committee. I'm here today to speak against House Bill 7003 and offer you my scientific perspective. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

My name is Julie Lemay, and I'm senior environmental health scientist at Gradient, an environmental health and risk sciences consulting firm. I have a master's degree in public health from Boston University, and prior to joining Gradient, I was a health risk assessor with the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. I am currently an elected member of the Board of Health in my town and currently serving as the vice-chair of the board.
While I'm here today on behalf of the recycled rubber industry, I'm also the mother of a wonderful kindergartener who has played twice a day on his school's recycled rubber play yard for the past four years, so I have a personal connection to this topic as well.

Dozens of regulatory and peer-reviewed studies that have evaluated risk of recycled rubber in the past decade have all found the same thing. There is no evidence that the levels of chemicals in recycled rubber present a public health concern. These studies, like all scientific studies, have limitations, but just because they have limitations does not mean that we throw them out. We look for patterns in the different studies to determine if they tell a consistent story. And when dozens of studies all find the same result -- that there is not a concern -- then you have some confidence in that body of evidence.

In addition to these studies, new studies that comprehensively evaluate the issues surrounding recycled rubber have been published just within the last year. These include a Dutch government study in 2018 that reaffirms the conclusions from a Dutch 2016 study that recycled rubber fields are "safe" and that children at play, pets, and cattle that accidently ingest soil from the borders are not at risk as well as a study from the European Union and another from the French Agency for Food, Environment, and Occupational Health and Safety in November 2018 that found similar results of negligible risk for children and adolescents playing on recycled rubber surfaces.
Finally, my colleagues and I recently published our multi-pathway risk assessment on recycled rubber in the peer-reviewed journal Environmental Research. Our study found that risks from chemical exposures for adults, adolescents, and small children playing on recycled rubber were below U.S. EPA guideline levels and not really different from those playing on natural surfaces. Taken together, the results of these recently published studies reaffirm the results of the dozens of previously -- previously conducted studies that found no evidence of public health concern. I urge you to oppose House Bill 7003, and thank you again for your time today.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Thank you very much. I appreciate you coming here, and you said that you are on behalf of the Gradient Corp. Can you tell me a little bit about the Gradient Corp?

JULIE LEMAY: Sure, so we're an environmental and risk sciences consulting firm located in Cambridge, Massachusetts. So, we work with nonprofits, industries, government agencies, both state and local, to advise them on scientific matters of all times. I'm a human health risk assessor, so I work in that area. We also have other people in, you know, environmental chemistry and other sorts of areas.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Because I'm not familiar with your company, do you also have business clients -- clients from the business world?

JULIE LEMAY: Yes, we do.
REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Yeah, are any of those clients -- would they be affected by this moratorium on crumb rubber playgrounds?

JULIE LEMAY: Sure, so my time today here is paid by the recycled -- recycled rubber industry. So, they -- they found me as a result of my multi-pathway chemical risk assessment that I did last year. So, that risk assessment came out in the Environmental Research journal. They reviewed that and then said, hey we'd really like you to go and talk to the folks in Connecticut about your research.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Okay, so technically you work for the Gradient Corporation, but you are here representing a tire company.

JULIE LEMAY: That's correct.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Great. Thank you very much. Oh, I'm sorry, which tire company?

JULIE LEMAY: Well, it's the trade organization.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): The trade organization. And can you give me the name of the trade organization?

JULIE LEMAY: It's a group of --

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): I'm sorry.

JULIE LEMAY: So, it's a group of -- a group of -- a group of different -- so, it's Liberty Tire and some other ones. I don't know specifically.
REP. LINEHAN (103RD): I’m sorry to put you on the spot for that.

JULIE LEMAY: No, that’s okay.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Okay, great, and to my co-chair -- do you have any questions?

SENATOR ABRAMS (13TH): No, you asked my question. Thank you.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): And Representative Boyd.

REP. BOYD (50TH): Thank you, Madam Chair. Just a quick question because we've -- this has come before this committee the last -- the last two sessions, and there was a lot of talk about an EPA report that was forthcoming actually two years ago. I have not tracked it, but I imagine in your business you have. Has that EPA report been put out, and if so, what does it say?

JULIE LEMAY: No, unfortunately it hasn't come out yet.

REP. BOYD (50TH): Really?

JULIE LEMAY: You know, my guess is because of the government shutdown, it's probably been delayed even further. But as of last I heard from some colleagues that mid-2019 was when it was expected now. We had expected it out in -- in August 2018, then September. They pushed it back to November, then I think, you know, holiday season and the government shutdown got in the way. So, best I can
guess, it would be mid-2019, but again that's been pushed back for --

REP. BOYD (50TH): Right. Okay. So, okay, I wasn't sure if it had been issued. So, in -- in your research in your capacity, has there been any interaction with the federal government and the EPA as to, you know, part of it that -- have they tipped their cards at all as to what they may be saying?

JULIE LEMAY: Well, there have been several previous studies. I mean ["Sure" in background] not from EPA, but Consumer Product Safety Commission has looked at issues related to artificial turf and several -- you know, several other international government bodies have -- have done work. So, I would suspect that EPA is looking towards those other bodies and trying to see what they are saying on those topics. But EPA has not tipped their hand, no.

REP. BOYD (50TH): Okay. Thank you very much. Thank you, Madam Chair.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): You are certainly welcome, Representative. Are there any other questions? Yes, Representative Green.

REP. GREEN (55TH): Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you for your testimony. Could you tell me, did your study show have children ever been harmed by the rubber that they play with and they play on?

JULIE LEMAY: Sure. So -- so our study looked at -- looked at adults and adolescent children. So, we looked at soccer players, and specifically indoor
and outdoor soccer players, and then also a composite soccer player -- so someone who's training for the Olympics or playing outdoor soccer, playing indoor soccer, and then also the parents that are sitting there devotedly watching their child and maybe younger siblings. So, if you're the six year olds who are, you know, sitting on the side of the field, maybe touching the crumb rubber, ingesting it, getting in on their skin -- that sort of thing. So, we looked at a variety of different pathways. We looked at ingestion, and we looked at dermal. We looked at inhalation -- so, breathing it in -- and we found that all of the levels for all of those pathways added together were below U.S. EPA's levels for both cancer and for non-cancer risks.

REP. GREEN (55TH): Okay. Thank you.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Yes, Representative Wilson Pheanious.

REP. WILSON PHEANIOUS (53RD): Yes, good morning. Thank you, Madam Chairman. I'm wondering, is there consistency in the industry in the way this crumb rubber is produced. Is there -- is it -- are all the -- is there any -- I guess I'm wondering is there any variation across the industry in the way this is done such that some of it might be more harmful than others, or is it all -- is there any standard for consistency in the way these tires are ground, or the tires that are used, or anything of that nature?

JULIE LEMAY: So, I think I'd have to defer to the people in the industry for the exact composition of every individual product, but I can tell you that
for our multi-pathway risk assessment, we looked at studies that were -- 37 different studies that were done for the actual crumb rubber. So, we found like -- we found that that was a pretty good representation of a variety of different sources of crumb rubber. So, we didn't necessarily target one particular type of rubber from any particular company. We just took all of the data that we could find and pulled all that together. And I know several of the other, you know, government bodies of Connecticut did some research. Dutch agency did some research. They've looked at a variety of different types of fields and different types of playground surfaces, and basically all found the same thing -- that there's not a public health concern.


REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Any other questions? Yes, Representative Kokoruda.
REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): Thank you, Madam Chair. Just to build on that, one thing I hear all the time is about the heat -- you know, these fields in the summer. I see my grandchildren playing on a boiling hot day, and I do -- can't stop but think about what I've heard in this committee over the last four years. Has that been addressed as far as how these hot summer days if camps are being run, or if children are playing on playground?

JULIE LEMAY: Sure, so there are increased temperatures that I'm aware of. I'm specifically more of a chemical risk assessor, so I didn't look at that in my study. ["Okay" in background] But just to, you know, pivot a little bit back to my
study, we did look at lots of studies. We looked at inhalation, so that would've taken into account, you know, different temperatures on different days. And that was taken into account, and despite all of that, it was still below those U.S. EPA levels of concern.

REP. WILSON PHEANIOUS (53RD): Thank you.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): I have a followup question. Regarding your study and the studies that you looked at to compile for your study, who were the backers of those? Who actually financed those studies?

JULIE LEMAY: So, for our study, part of it was funded by a health commission in Washington State, so they funded sort of the data collection part of it, but the rest of it was just done on our own time. So, my colleagues and I did it on our own time. It was not funded by the recycled rubber industry or anybody else. To my knowledge, all of the state studies are probably coming from state funds. I don't specifically know their funding sources, but I generally assume that ones coming out of state and federal agencies are, you know, funded out of state and federal funds.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): And so, I have a few questions actually then, if you can answer on a science level. First, the crumb rubber is the broken up tires that are made to look like rubber mulch, correct?

JULIE LEMAY: Yes.
REP. LINEHAN (103RD): And then, additionally, there's the poured rubber, which is often used in playgrounds for easy wheelchair access for kids with disabilities. So, on any of those studies that either you conducted or you compiled the data, did they look at the difference between poured rubber and actual crumb rubber, or was it just all rubber everywhere?

JULIE LEMAY: So, the majority of the studies are looking at the artificial turf infill, so the crumb portion of the rubber, so the one that's more free flowing than the kind of poured. But, from an exposure perspective, I feel that it would be fairly similar if we had looked at -- you know, we were looking at sort of the material that comes from the tire, not necessarily when it was in place. So, the chemical composition is gonna remain largely the same regardless of whether you're pouring it or using it in a more free flowing form.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): The reason I ask is there have been studies -- and I'm sorry that I don't have it in front of me, and I tried to look it up as you were testifying. There has been a study that said that there was the recycled rubber that looks like wood chips, right? So, it's not necessarily those tiny pieces of crumb rubber.

JULIE LEMAY: Yes, the larger shredded pieces.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): And it was in a community in another state, and I apologize I don't have it in front of me, but what I'd like to do is be able to call you with that at another time and talk about it. But what they found was, that chemicals from that because of the movement of the pieces that rub
against each other, it does then make something easier to be airborne and that some of those -- the levels of those carcinogens -- were found in apartments of children who had played on that playground previously and that they were carrying it with them. Did you find that in any of your studies?

JULIE LEMAY: No. So our risk assessment looked at sort of the crumb rubber material and not necessarily distinguishing between small granules versus larger ones. So, we look at the chemical composition of what's coming from shredded -- shredded tire. So, I would say from a chemicals perspective, including for ingestion, dermal, and inhalation, I would not expect there to be a significant difference, particularly in the -- you know, the inhalation piece that you're mentioning between sort of the larger pieces and the smaller pieces, but I'm not familiar with the specific study that you're speaking of.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): So -- so when we're talking about those little pieces, you said that you looked at inhalation and so on and so forth, but that would -- that wouldn't take into account then that -- Scientifically speaking, a question -- let me back that up -- if the crumb rubber pieces that are bigger and are the shredded tires and they're the mulch looking pieces that are typically used for preschool playgrounds -- we're not talking about artificial turf fields for football, we're actually talking about the playgrounds, 'cause that's what this bill looks at right -- so, those larger pieces, if they're moving around under children's feet, and it's going like this [background noise], wouldn't
then the friction allow something to become airborne and therefore more easily inhaled or carried upon someone's clothing, upon their body, to keep those chemicals for a longer period of time near their body than it would if it's an artificial turf situation?

JULIE LEMAY: Well, so -- so I can speak a little bit from personal experience, where my -- so I have a six year old now, and for the past four years he was at a preschool that had an artificial turf field. It was -- so it was an artificial turf play yard -- that was where there play structures were -- and it had the granules, and it had the turf, but within those granules, they're rubbing together in a similar fashion to how the larger pieces. We also, in a neighboring town, have one of those larger -- those playgrounds with the larger pieces, so I'm familiar with that too, but I think the rubbing of the granules is very similar to the rubbing of the actual larger pieces. So, from an exposure perspective, I wouldn't necessarily draw a distinction in the amount of particles that are coming off. That said, I have not measured the actual number of particles that are coming off, but, you know, based on my scientific perspective, I wouldn't expect there to be a significant difference there.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Thank you very much. That's helpful. Do we have any other questions. Oh, Representative Comey.

REP. COMEY (102ND): Thank you. Thank you for your testimony. It's very interesting. Are there -- how does the recycled tire material stand as far as
being regulated or allowed in other countries? Can you talk to that?

JULIE LEMAY: Sure, so like I mentioned in my testimony, there -- there are a lot of different studies from different agencies. So, there's a Swedish environmental agency, there's a French agency, there's Dutch agency. They have -- many of them have done these studies on the recycled crumb rubber, and they have not found there to be a public health concern. As far as the actual regulations, I can't speak to what they do in -- in other countries, but I can tell you what their health agencies have found.

REP. COMEY (102ND): Okay. Thank you.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Thank you very much. We appreciate you coming in.

JULIE LEMAY: Thank you.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Next we will have Representative Kupchick, followed by Isabelle Menozzi and Sheila Diamond. Is the representative here? ["She is" in background] Hello. Welcome.

REP. KUPCHICK (132ND): Good afternoon. You know, this is the first time I've been before this committee.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Well, welcome.

REP. KUPCHICK (132ND): And I've been here a while, so -- I've actually brought a constituent with me, and I just wanna thank Representative -- Co-Chairs
Linehan and Senator Abrams, and Ranking Members Green and Senator Kelly. I would like to introduce my constituent, Dominic Ciano [phonetic]. He is here to testify on HB 7005. Thank you.

DOMINIC CIANO: (Is this working okay? Yeah.) Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony for Bill 7005. I'd like to oppose the bill, as religion is a private and personal matter, and a clergy should not be involved in a parent's decision to use a religious or submit a religious exemption. As per its own definition, religious is a particular system of faith and worship or a pursuit or interest to which someone ascribes supreme -- supreme importance.

According to some estimates, there are over 4,200 religions in the world today, and not all of them have a clergy, making this bill discriminatory. There are a total of -- in Connecticut, there are a total of -- well, it's over 600 -- I think it's over 613 students in Connecticut from preschool to high school and only about 1,255 are using a religious exemption. That said, the religious exemption is unnecessary, and it doesn't need to be changed.

Just a few final points, I'm not gonna take all the time here, I know you have a lot of -- quite a lot of people that probably wanna chat here. Connecticut is the Constitution State, and as such, we should uphold our constitutional right to a religion of freedom -- to freedom of religion. Religious exemption is in no way, shape, or form a threat to anyone, and as a minority group, our rights should be protected like all other minority rights. In Connecticut -- Connecticut law states
that every child age of -- age of five and up have the right to a free and public education, and so let's keep it that way. Bottom line, there's not a problem to solve here. Bill 7005 is discriminatory and undermines freedom of religion. Thank you.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Thank you very much.

DOMINIC CIANO: Oh, do you have any questions?

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Well, let's find out.

DOMINIC CIANO: Yeah. [Laughing]

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Does anyone have any questions? Seeing none. Thank you very much for your time. We appreciate you coming here today. ["Thank you for your time" in background] Thank you very much.

We'd like to call Isabelle Menozzi, followed by Sheila Diamond, and then Jennifer Shafer. Welcome to the committee. Please state your name and the town in which you reside. Thank you.

ISABELLE MENOZZI: Hi, my name is Isabelle Menozzi, and I'm from Roxbury, Connecticut. Dear members and chairs of the Children's Committee. I come today to oppose HB 7005. It is absolutely outrageous to me that the state is attempting to force me or my family to make medical choices against my religious beliefs. I completely oppose vaccine mandates period. Freedom to exercise a religion is a fundamental constitutional right, whereas right to privacy isn't mentioned in the Constitution and is often misunderstood. No one should have to jump
through hoops to exercise right of conscience. These types of things are what the Supreme Court calls a burden on religious freedom.

There is no burden on a school nurse to provide a simple signature acknowledging that I am who I say I am. No big deal. I personally have experienced the discrimination from a school nurse who refused to sign -- to acknowledge my signature on an exemption. She was very rude and would not hear me out when I tried to clarify the role of her signature, and she still refused. So, I went to a town clerk, who kindly signed it, but because of this, I was forced to disclose private health information to a perfect stranger. Why do nurses do this? I believe it's because of the term anti-vaxxer. It was manufactured by the pharmaceutical industry and promoted by the media. It is not only hateful but dangerous to us. Claiming that we are dangerous and a threat to society is completely unscientific and outright false. The term is encouraging discrimination because of our religious beliefs.

Due to some legislators validating the media-manufactured hysteria by introducing legislative mandates, posting anti-vax slurs on social media, families like us are increasingly subject to harassment, discrimination, and even threats. This is unsafe and should be not -- and should not be tolerated in our Connecticut legislature. That is an extreme form of bullying in my eyes and is very irresponsible. The pharmaceutical industry is attacking our freedom of religion, and we will not put up with it any more.
The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Conscience and Religious Freedom Division is open for business. We, the people, will inundate them with complaints until this nonsense stops. I ask this legislature to stop harassing us immediately and forever. Threatening our religious exemption is harassment and discrimination. Please kill this bill. And for those of you working here who are protecting people not corporations, thank you so much for your service. I have a tremendous amount of respect for you. Thank you. [Background talking] Any questions?

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Thank you very much. Are there any questions from the committee? Seeing none. Thank you so very much.

ISABELLE MENOZZI: No, thank you.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): The committee will call Sheila Diamond, after which we will have Jennifer Shafer and Maria Smith. Welcome to the committee. Thank you for coming. If you could please state your name and the town in which you reside.

SHEILA DIAMOND: Thank you for having me. I'm Sheila Diamond, and I reside in Simsbury, Connecticut.

Dear members of the Committee on Children, as a licensed registered nurse in the state of Connecticut, I am firmly opposed to HB 7005. School nurses are the medical liaison between the school and the parents. They are bound by privacy laws and are responsible for upholding those in regard to religious exemptions. In our state, we have 1,270
schools and 1,255 students utilizing religious exemptions, according to the Statewide School Student Survey Data Summary for the 2017-2018 school year. This is approximately one student per school.

On the rare occasion when a school nurse is presented with a religious exemption, they are simply being asked to acknowledge/confirm the parent's identity, not verify the religious beliefs. If some school nurses aren't comfortable with this, the issue lies in education and not legislation. And easy, cost-effective, and simple solution: Have local public health departments email all school nurses clarification as to what their role is in acknowledging religious exemptions, which is verifying a parent is who they say they are and signing a form.

Nurses, upon entry into the most trusted profession for nearly the past 20 years, according to Gallup polls, are well aware that signing off on forms and documentation is a critical part of their job. It is quite clear that this raised bill has absolutely no benefit to the state. There is a system in place that works, is utilized by an exceptionally small minority of parents, protects the privacy of families, and maintains separation of church and state. By forcing to utilize a government employee, privacy is not preserved, nor is the separation of church and state when clergy is utilized.

I strongly urge the members of this committee to vote no on HB 7005. It is legislative creep at best and at worst an underhanded attempt to remove religious exemptions. There is no need to remove them. Connecticut has one of the highest rates of
vaccination in the country, a rate that has remained steady since 2003. Religious exemptions have made up .0 -- .321 -- .5 percent of exemptions in the past 15 years, the length of time the state has been tracking them separately from medical exemptions. Thank you for your time and your consideration.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Thank you very much. Are there any questions? Thank you for coming. Next we have Jennifer Shafer, followed by Maria Smith and Rachel C. Welcome to the Committee on Children. We ask that you state your name and the town in which you reside.

JENNIFER SHAFER: Thank you so much. My name is Jennifer Shafer. I reside in Portland, and dear members of the committee, I ask you to oppose HB 7005. I oppose this bill. First and foremost, religious freedom is protected by the First Amendment. We are the Constitution State. Informed consent is a human right, a God-given right. The state cannot decide who and what is God. God [laughing] -- the state cannot decide who and what is God. The church nor the state has ownership over our bodies. Our bodies are that of our own, and our children are part of that.

There are -- okay -- so, I'm sorry, I'll just back up here.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Take your time.

JENNIFER SHAFER: We have a right to protect and question medical procedures that we deem immoral and unsafe. There are aborted fetal cells in vaccines. That is a fact. I object to all vaccines using
aborted fetal cells, animal cells, heavy metals, and other toxic ingredients. I refuse to put these ingredients into myself and my children. It is ungodly and unnatural. I have every right to refuse for myself these products, especially -- especially when they say things like, "This product has not been evaluated for carcinogenic or mutagenic potential, or potential to impair fertility," from the package insert from Merck for the MMR vaccine. That is the case with all vaccines on the market today. And we have a 30 percent decline in fertility rates in this country, and we have to ask ourselves why.

Vaccines are not always safe and effective. With my testimony, I have an 88-page document that comes from the lawsuit brought by Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., and Informed Consent Action Network. This is their response to HHS. I had sent that in with my testimony, a PDF file for all of the committee members. Unfortunately, I was only able to print this one, but I did send that PDF to you. I beg you to please, please read this document.

So, I oppose HB 7005 to protect my right to religious exemption without discrimination or persecution. I have personally been threatened by people online for voicing my opposition to a bill such as this and religious freedom and also the right to informed consent. So, the threat is very, very real. People have told me they wish I would die and my children should die, and that's a terrible, terrible thing. I'm not an anti-vaxxer. I have legitimate moral, spiritual problems with having the state say you must have your child vaccinated to attend school. I pay taxes here. I
should not be forced to home school. My children do not wanna homeschool. I should not be forced to put my children in private school, and I should not be questioned about my religious and spiritual beliefs. It is the First Amendment right protected by our Constitution, and it's very important that we honor that. Thank you. Thank you for your time.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Thank you very much. Are there any followup questions from the committee? Seeing none. Thank you so very much.

JENNIFER SHAFER: Thank you.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): We'd like to call Maria Smith, followed by Rachel C., and Gina Consiglio. Hello. Welcome. Would you please state your name and the town in which you reside.

MARIA SMITH: Good afternoon, Madam Chairs and Children's Committee. My name is Maria Smith, and I'm from Canterbury, Connecticut. I'm gonna read my testimony because I wanna make sure I don't miss anything. I have several concerns regarding the bill which stands before us, HB 7005. I am opposed to it, and I'm gonna share with you the reasons that I feel that way, but I'm compelled to ask why is this bill being proposed? Has there been a problem with nurses not wanting to sign the acknowledgement, and if so, why? Could the issue be addressed with training? They are simply acknowledging a piece of paper. Have constituents requested that leaders be added - religious leaders be added to the list of those able to provide an acknowledging signature, or is there a reason you feel this is necessary?
Those were questions I had regarding the proposed bill as I reviewed it. Now I'd like to explain my reasons for opposing it.

Number one, the requirement for acknowledgement by anyone other than someone covered by a HIPAA regulation exposes our children's health information to people outside of the HIPAA regulatory system and there I believe it's an invasion of our privacy. It exposes all their medical stuff to people that have no need to know.

Number two, the acknowledgement requirement itself discriminates against people filing a religious exemption because it requires an acknowledgment. Why? We have several documents that go through the school systems, none of which require an acknowledgement to secure knowledge that the person admitting the paperwork is indeed the parent. We don't do that for anything else. So, it seems like harassment that we've added that requirement to the list.

Number three, as others have stated, I am very concerned about legislative creep. It's commonly known that a number of our legislators are bent on removing the religious exemption. It's all over social media. I won't name names. They all know who they are. It also appears that the addition of a religious leader as an acceptable acknowledger may be with the intent of changing this form from an acknowledgement to an approval at a later date. This would be a violation of our religious freedoms. My religious beliefs are mine alone, and currently do not and should not require the approval of any religious leader.
And finally, I'm concerned that if this bill leaves committee and goes to the floor for a vote, any of those legislators desiring to remove our religious exemption could easily submit an amendment to this bill stating just that, putting our First Amendment rights at risk while denying us the opportunity to engage on this issue. It would be unconscionable to deprive your constituents of the ability to exercise their religious freedoms when there really is no credible reason to do so right now, given the statistics that several other people have given relative to the numbers of people claiming a religious exemption.

Representative Linehan, I applaud you for being concerned about ingredients in your foods and any number of other things. [Beeping] I would encourage you to look at the ingredients on vaccines, and I would ask you all to oppose this legislation, Bill 7005.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Thank you very much for your time. We appreciate you coming. Are there any questions from the committee? Seeing none. Thank you very much. Next up is Rachel C., followed by Gina Consiglio and Maria Hong.

RACHEL CROCKETT: Good afternoon, Ladies and Gentlemen of the committee. My name is Rachel Crocket. I'm from the town of Avon, Connecticut.

As an attorney, as a citizen, and as a mother, I am strongly opposed to HB 7005. This bill constitutes an unconstitutional infringement upon the free exercise of religion. This country was primarily
founded upon the principle of being able to freely exercise one's religion without restrictions or impositions from the state in our very First Amendment right, which we all hold dear and which must be fiercely protected by our legislature. It is your duty as legislators to ensure that any proposed legislation protects the First Amendment rights of your constituents.

This bill attempts to restrict the persons who are able to sign religious exemption forms, which is an unnecessary barrier to the free exercise of one's religion. This restriction, for there's no public interest of the state, but is rather specifically orchestrated to have a chilling effect upon the free exercise of religion. The proponents of this bill have made it clear that their ultimate goal is to restrict the form to only be signed by clergy members, and one day to remove the religious exemption to vaccinations altogether.

Religion is a very personal matter made up of your personal convictions and beliefs. It is not restricted to religions that are formal or organized or have a clergy member who serves as a leader. If we require clergy to sign religious exemption forms, this will be discriminatory in one religion versus another religion.

The Supreme Court has previously struck down laws that have attempted to discriminate between various types of religion. It is not within the discretion of the legislature to determine which religions or which religious beliefs are valid or invalid. Such a notion goes against hundreds of years of clearly established constitutional law.
As other members of the public have spoken to, there are valid reasons for vaccinations to be against one's religious beliefs. There are aborted fetal cells and other ingredients that are against my personal religious beliefs. If we take out school nurses from being able to sign these forms, then we will be forced to disclose private HIPAA information to individuals who do not fall within HIPAA's purview, and that is a real problem. As other members of the public have spoken to here today, the threat is very real. I have seen people threatened when they disclose their status that they do not vaccinate their children, and this is unfair.

If this bill were passed, it could open up the state of Connecticut to costly and time-consuming litigation over the constitutionality of this bill, which would be an enormous waste of this state's precious resources and unnecessarily increase the tax burden of your constituents. There is no issue with the current religious exemption form, which is used by a very small minority of families, and there is no reason to change it other than an attempt to chill a person's right to exercise their religion. I plead with this committee to uphold their constituents' First Amendment rights by opposing this unnecessary and unconstitutional bill. Thank you for your time.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Thank you very much for coming. I just -- I would like to take a moment to recognize that you are testifying whilst baby-wearing. [Laughing] As a baby-wearer myself, I think it's fantastic, and I absolutely love that we are the Committee on Children and you could come
here and testify with a child. I think that's fantastic. I just -- I have a quick followup question, if you don't mind.

RACHEL CROCKETT: Absolutely.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): You had mentioned that many times you feel ostracized in the community in that people are publishing your private information. Before we started this committee meeting, it was brought to my attention doxing, which, for those of you who don't know, it's a term where someone publishes your private information on the internet for the purpose of outing you when you don't agree with someone. And, once again, I will reiterate that we ask that no one does that with anyone testifying here today.

And this may seem a little off topic, but my question is, states recently have -- some states have put forward legislation to somehow ban doxing, have consequences for doxing, and if -- if a bill like that is in front of this committee, would you come and testify on behalf of that?

RACHEL CROCKETT: I absolutely would.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Great, thank you. And so we ask that you keep an eye on that, and we'll see what happens in the coming years.

RACHEL CROCKETT: Thank you for your time, and thank you for allowing me to bring my children.
REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Thank you. And let's see if there are any other questions from committee members? No, great. Thank you.

RACHEL CROCKETT: Thank you.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): We have Gina Consiglio followed by Maria Hong and Tatiana Lukyanova.

GINA CONSIGLIO: Hello, my name is Gina Consiglio from Madison, Connecticut. My lovely senator and representative are here. Madam Chair, thank you -- everybody, committee members. I'm kind of aligning with the nurses. I can completely understand not wanting to do something you don't want to do. I take a libertarian stance, where their motto is, "Don't touch my stuff, and don't tell me what to do." So, I can understand how the nurses could be upset by not wanting to do something they don't want to do. I work at the Madison Arts Barn. We're a great community center. There's a god awful concession stand where the candy like just drives me bonkers, and I have to sell it to these children. So, as I'm selling them a gummy-something, I'm like do you know there's blue and red dye in there and that's carcinogenic, but I have to do it because I'm an employee of the Madison Arts Barn. I try educating where I can, but I do it. And, I think the nurses, that's their job. They need to acknowledge our forms, so why -- why do we have to take them off?

I do have a solution. What we can do is go back to pre-2015, where this was all added, and just go back to the way it was. My daughter went to kindergarten 10 years ago, all I had to do was hand in a form. Nobody acknowledged anything. It was so simple. It
was so easy. Nobody else needed to know. Why did we even change things in 2015? If nurses are having a problem, let's go back pre-2015.

And I wanted to address -- you said, what are the effects on the schoolchildren. You are implying that if the religious exemption were to go away, our kids are fine 'cause we could just homeschool. That is not a solution. I pay taxes. I've had grandparents and uncles die in two world wars and Vietnam for my freedom. It is not fair for you to assume I can just homeschool. I have an only child -- here she is with Representative Kokoruda. She's a straight-A student. She plays three instruments and speaks two languages. For the past five years, she cries every night, "Mommy, will I be able to go to school. Do I have to leave my friends?" I mean, you ask about the effect on the children -- this is the effect -- my daughter living in fear that she can't be with her friends, and there's no reason.

I also wanna bring up Bill Number 5863, ESTABLISHING CONNECTICUT AS A SANCTUARY STATE, where immigrants are protected.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): I'm sorry, ma'am, that bill is not in front of this committee.

GINA CONSIGLIO: Okay, so I'm asking you where's my sanctuary state? Where can I go with my child? Do you have a place for me -- Mohegan Sun Reservation, Amish, anywhere -- where will you put me? That's my question.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): I'm sorry. Is that a direct question posed to me?
GINA CONSIGLIO: It could be rhetorical. [Laughing]

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Thank you very much for coming.

GINA CONSIGLIO: Thank you for listening.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): I appreciate your time. Just as a matter of clarification, I appreciate your testimony in explaining what you feel and what your daughter feels because that was an honest question -- wondering what the implications would be. There was no -- nothing that I was hiding with that -- that was an actual real question. So, I do appreciate you taking the time to answer that.

GINA CONSIGLIO: Thank you.


REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): Thank you, Madam Chair, and I know Senator Cohen and I are delighted to welcome you to the Capitol. Gina, I know how passionate you are about this, like so many people today, and you know what, that passion is just advocacy for your children. We understand that. Thank you so much.

GINA CONSIGLIO: Thank you so much.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Representative Wilson Pheanious.

REP. WILSON PHEANIOUS (53RD): Yes, I'm wondering if you can tell me more about the intimidation that
your daughter may have received, or what's frightened her to that extent?

GINA CONSIGLIO: No, it's not intimidation. It is fear of not being allowed to go to school.

REP. WILSON PHEANIOUS (53RD): And is that coming from the school -- or somebody there?

GINA CONSIGLIO: No, it comes from her mommy having to come here all the time to defend our rights. And she's taking civics this year, and she's learning about slavery and civil rights, and she can't wrap her mind around why our government doesn't want her in school -- just because our family has religious beliefs. She doesn't understand why she's not being allowed. So, she feels segregated, and for an 11 year old, that's very damaging. ["Sure -- of course" in background] She feels like she's not like other people, she's apart, and she's not gonna be allowed to do what other kids do.

REP. WILSON PHEANIOUS (53RD): Right, and what I'm getting at, or what I'm trying to get at, is is that coming from -- is somebody imposing -- is the school nurse saying, well you're not -- you don't get vaccinated, so therefore you're not -- there's something wrong with you? Or is that coming from any place other than the --

GINA CONSIGLIO: No, it's just coming from me having to fight these bills every year for the past five years.

REP. WILSON PHEANIOUS (53RD): Okay. All right. Thank you very much.
GINA CONSIGLIO: Thank you.

REP. WILSON PHEANIOUS (53RD): Appreciate your being here.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Are there any more questions? Thank you very much for your time. Maria Hong and then we are followed by Tatiana Lukyanova and Nancy D. Thank you very much. Can you please state your name and the town in which you reside?

MARIA HONG: Yes, hi, I'm Maria Hong. I live in Westport, Connecticut. And honorable members of the Committee on Children, thank you very much for this opportunity to speak today. I oppose any legislation that would restrict a parent's right to religious vaccine exemptions. House Bill 7005 eliminates nurses as persons who may acknowledge religious objections to vaccinations. Nurses should not be removed as the people one can trust to confide in about religious beliefs and vaccinations. The nurse-patient relationship must be kept intact. This legislation discriminates against families with sincere religious beliefs opposing the administration of one or more vaccines to their children. House Bill 7005 denies children with religious exemptions their educational right afforded to them by the Connecticut State Constitution, which guarantees the right to religious practice. In addition, it is my family's creed that vaccines are contrary to our First Amendment rights afforded to us by the U.S. Constitution. "God commands us that we are to regard our bodies as temples of God's holy spirit,
and that we are to honor God, our creator and possessive -- possessor of our very bodies by not defiling them." That's in First Corinthians 6 verses 19-20 and also 10-31.

The state has no compelling interest in approving this legislation other than to harass a protected group of people. This legislation is a violation of our children's religious and personal freedoms. It is a slippery slope -- I know you've heard this already -- when legislators modify religious vaccine exemptions. This bill could easily be modified to eliminate religious exemptions altogether. There is no need to make it harder for people to assert religious exemptions to vaccination. The Connecticut vaccination rate is currently over 98 percent, and the current law is working. I urge the Committee on Children to oppose House Bill 7005. I thank you for respectfully adhering to the First Amendment rights guaranteed to citizens by the United States of America's Constitution and reinforced on a state level by the Fourteenth Amendment, without prejudice. Thank you very much.

SENATOR ABRAMS (13TH): Thank you, Ms. Hong. Are there any questions or comments by the committee? No? Thank you very much for being here today.

MARIA HONG: Thank you.

SENATOR ABRAMS (13TH): Tatiana -- and I'm going to absolutely murder your last name if I try it, so I would appreciate if you introduced yourself and told us what town you're from. Thank you. And your -- is that your daughter? Beautiful. Could you
introduce her as well, so it's on the record? Thank you.

TATIANA LUKYANOVA: My name is Tatiana Lukyanova, ["And your daughter's name --" in background] and this is Hannah Walton.

SENATOR ABRAMS (13TH): Hi Hannah. Thank you for being here.

TATIANA LUKYANOVA: Dear Children's Committee members, thank you for the opportunity to testify. I would ask you please oppose HB 7005, AN ACT PROHIBITING ACKNOWLEDGING THE PARENTAL STATEMENTS CONCERNING RELIGIOUS OBJECTIONS TO VACCINATIONS BY SCHOOL NURSES AND PERMITTING MEMBERS OF THE CLERGY TO ACKNOWLEDGE SUCH STATEMENTS.

I believe that House Bill 7005 is an attempt to discriminate against people of certain religious creeds and is a violation of a child's constitutional right to an education. The purpose of the nurse's signature is simply to acknowledge the wishes of an individual and to confirm that he or she is who he or she claims to be. The signature is merely an acknowledgement, as opposed to confirmation, of someone's wishes. Why does the current policy need to be changed? It requires no liability on the part of the nurse or anyone else who is called on witness -- on to witness. And I kindly ask you to reject this bill and protect our constitutional and First Amendment rights. Thank you very much.
SENATOR ABRAMS (13TH): Thank you for being here. Are there any comments or questions from the committee? Senator Kelly.

SENATOR KELLY (21ST): Thank you very much for coming today to share your view on pending legislation. I see that you're focused on the part of an acknowledgement. So, just wanna get to that issue -- I wanna make sure that we're clear on what an acknowledgement is. So, when the school nurse acknowledges that the person signs the document, what exactly are they acknowledging?

TATIANA LUKYANOVA: That the person who asks to sign -- so, the nurse is acknowledging that yes this person is the person who he claims to be. It's John Hopkins, you know, if -- if he says he's John Hopkins.

SENATOR KELLY (21ST): Correct. So -- so the school nurse is basically making sure that the person who's signing the document is who they claim they are.

TATIANA LUKYANOVA: That's true.

SENATOR KELLY (21ST): Okay. And the school nurse -- do they -- I'm gonna say verify or attest to the statements or the truth that's contained in the --

TATIANA LUKYANOVA: No.

SENATOR KELLY (21ST): Okay.

TATIANA LUKYANOVA: No, they don't.
SENATOR KELLY (21ST): So, it's just making sure that if, in your example, John Hopkins is signing the document, that that's actually John Hopkins.

TATIANA LUKYANOVA: Yes, so it's like notary, except he takes money.

SENATOR KELLY (21ST): Now, in that regard, one would think that a school nurse would know the parents of the students that are in the schools in which they -- they are employed, correct?

TATIANA LUKYANOVA: Right.

SENATOR KELLY (21ST): Okay. So then, this acknowledgement is not going to -- at least in your opinion -- or let me change this differently -- would the school nurse be in a position where they would have to, in other words, "lie" by taking an acknowledgement as to the statements contained in the affidavit.

TATIANA LUKYANOVA: I'm sorry. I'm distracted, but could you please repeat this question?

SENATOR KELLY (21ST): Sure. Do you believe that a nurse, if they're just taking an acknowledgment, making sure that the person that [child talking in background] the person that signs it, signs it -- are they going to be put in a position where they have to attest to the truth of the affidavit?

TATIANA LUKYANOVA: Probably -- I don't quite understand the question, but I think it's obvious. If John Hopkins says he's Michael Smith, that's lie,
and that should be an issue, but otherwise probably won't be issue.

SENATOR KELLY (21ST): Okay. Thank you.

TATIANA LUKYANOVA: Thank you very much.

SENATOR KELLY (21ST): No further questions.

SENATOR ABRAMS (13TH): Any other questions or comments from the members of the committee? Thank you very much for being here, and thank you for bringing Hannah.

TATIANA LUKYANOVA: Thank you so much.

SENATOR ABRAMS (13TH): Nancy D. Hi, if you could please tell us your full name and where you're from.

NANCY DEAN: Hello committee, I'm Nancy Dean from Avon, and this is my first time testifying. I wish I could have one of those schoolchildren come in and read my testimony. [Laughing] I do not like speaking in public, but I'm gonna go forth.

SENATOR ABRAMS (13TH): I'm sure you'll be great.

NANCY DEAN: Okay. Bear with me. Dear committee members, I request that you oppose HB 7005, AN ACT PROHIBITING THE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF PARENTAL STATEMENTS CONCERNING RELIGIOUS OBJECTIONS TO VACCINATIONS BY SCHOOL NURSES AND PERMITTING MEMBERS OF THE CLERGY TO ACKNOWLEDGE SUCH STATEMENTS. I -- going through my testimony at home, you know, you throw away one, you pick up another -- so, this is the order I decided to do it in. So, the
definition of religion. The definition of religion is a controversial subject in religious study, with scholars failing to agree on any one definition. Oxford Dictionary defines religion as, "The belief in and worship of a superhuman controlling power, especially a personal God or Gods." According to this definition, you may or may not have an organized group with a clergy. You don't need a place of worship. For that matter, you may choose to worship in private. That is your right and yours alone. It is discriminatory and unconstitutional to think otherwise -- if you believe in that definition. There is no room for interpretation if you believe or do not believe if someone might be lying about their religion. Therefore, I see no need to change the language of the current bill. To do so would be unconstitutional and discriminating -- sorry redundant.

The Health Committee should educate nurses as to their role in this matter, so they do not feel burdened -- the burden of playing God. They're simply to establish the identity of the parent/guardian, and to witness the signature on the exemption. The goal should not be to make it more difficult for the parent or guardian to obtain a signature.

I am very concerned about this legislative creep and that this bill will ultimately be used to further restrict religious exemptions. This part I added at the end: In 1947, the Nuremberg Code was introduced in an attempt to give clear rules -- what was legal and what is not when conducting human experiments. We all should familiarize with this document to understand what it is, what it stands for, and what
it established. The Nuremberg Code helps to ensure that the past will not be repeated. [Ringing] We must uphold the right to informed consent, and the rights of parents/guardians to decide what is best for their children without judgment. The purpose of the witness -- the nurses -- who signs the religious exemption form is to verify the parent/guardian. It's not to say that they agree with the exemption, respectfully.

SENATOR ABRAMS (13TH): You did -- you did a great job. [Laughing] Hope you'll do it again. Any comments or questions from the committee? Thank you for being here. And, Senator Kelly, I think that might have clarified what you were asking Tatiana. Thank you.

Meredith Nielson. Welcome. If you could state your name and where you're from.

MEREDITH NIELSON: I'm Meredith Nielson. I'm from Cheshire. Thank you for letting me speak. I will concur with much of what was said today. It may be repetitive, but I'm gonna say -- say everything I wrote down.

So, members of the Children's Committee, thank you for letting me speak. I am here to oppose House Bill 7005. While on the surface, this bill may appear straightforward, closer examination reveals some very concerning issues. Striking school nurse from the religious exemption is not logical or necessary and can reasonably lead to harassment. The school nurse is the person who keeps the form on file and should be the only person to whom parents are required to disclose their child's medical
status. Having to take the form to a stranger in a public setting is invasive and can be very uncomfortable. The particular school nurses who object have clearly misunderstood their role in the acknowledgement of the form. They are not being asked by current law to validate or condone anyone's beliefs or choices. They are simply acknowledging that the person submitting the form is the parent or guardian.

Providing information to nurses on this issue and clarifying their role is very simple and does not require legislation. Adding clergy to the exemption is not logical or necessary and sets the stage for discrimination. The law in Connecticut protects everyone from discrimination based on his or her religious creed, as is stated in 46a-64 of the General Statutes. There are many who do not belong to an organized or locally-based religious group. Adding clergy sets the stage for discrimination against those who fall into this category, particularly if the only remaining signatories exclude the school nurse.

While someone might consult their clergy to help make a decision, the clergy members should not be the person acknowledging their signature on a form that is submitted to a school. Acknowledging documents for school files has nothing to do with being a member of the clergy. Acknowledging the signature on an exemption form has absolutely nothing to do with the nature of a person's religious beliefs or creed. No one has the authority, earthly or godly, to pass judgment on the validity on another person's religious creed.
This bill opens the door to blatant religious discrimination and denial of a free and public education, which is the right of all children aged five and over, as the Statutes Section 10-15c. This has been presented under the guise of a simple clerical change. It is not a medical bill. The AAP, however, has already called for an amendment of this bill to strip parents' religious rights and choices away completely.

Allowing such an unnecessary and illogical bill with such potential for discrimination to progress further is a dangerous and slippery slope. This is not what our country was founded on, and the Connecticut legislature owes its constituents more than that. Bills with questionable intent remove any trust we have had in our government.

Some of the questions posed by this committee earlier were focused on the removal of the exemption and what would happen to the kids. If this bill were actually to be taken at face value, there should be no reason to be asking these questions of the people testifying. There is no need to change the current law. It has been working fine, and the people involved simply need to understand their roles. I ask you to please vote no to 7005. Thank you.

SENATOR ABRAMS (13TH): Thank you very much. Are there any questions or comments from the members of the committee? Thank you. Denise M. Welcome. Would you please give us your full name and where you're from.
DENISE MARIE: Sure, yes. My name is Denise Marie Lusitani [phonetic]. I'm from Avon, Connecticut. So, this is also my first time here today. And I've heard a lot of testimony in opposition to House Bill 7005, and I feel like I agree with it. And I'm also here to oppose, and I have a couple of points that I'm just going to read off to you.

I feel like this bill [background coughing] -- this bill shows no vested or compelling interest for the state to make these suggested changes -- removing the nurse and adding clergy. And the nurse, if the nurse isn't comfortable, as we've heard many times, they simple need to be educated on the meaning of their signature. They're not validating anything other than that a person is who they say they are. It's not their role to judge the validity of, to understand, or to question the beliefs of the person requesting a signature. A personally held religious belief does not have to be understood or accepted by others to hold validity and to be protected by our First Amendment freedoms.

Secondly, according to Connecticut law, in my understanding, every child over the age of five has the right to a free and public education. So, in my view, a child in class with an exemption is no -- it doesn't matter what type of exemption it is, they're the same, so they -- and if you remove one of these exemptions, then it's very clearly discriminatory. So, I just feel like there's no reason that this is even being discussed today. It works the way it is, and I hope it stays that way. Thank you.

SENATOR ABRAMS (13TH): Thank you very much. I appreciate your comments. Any comments or questions
from the members of the committee? Thank you for being here. Dr. Hannah Gale.

DR. HANNAH GALE: Good afternoon, Madam Chairman and members of the committee. I am Dr. Hannah Gale, and I reside in Fairfield. I hold a Master of Science from the University of Bridgeport as well as a doctorate in naturopathic medicine, and I am also the secretary for the Public Health Committee for the Fairfield RTM. But I come before you today as a private citizen with a personal religious belief. I am asking you to please oppose HB 7005, and I would like to share my personal story with you, if you don't mind, because I think it's relevant.

So, I am adopted. I was one of the babies of the Baby Scoop Era that extended from World War II into the 1970s, when birth control became generally available. My birth mother was a Catholic college student from Pennsylvania, and she was sent to Chicago to have me, and a private adoption was arranged.

My parents, who I loved with all my heart and who loved me with all their hearts, were Orthodox Jewish, and I was raised in a religious Orthodox Jewish home, where I experienced Sabbath and the traditions of my -- of my parents, as part of their love for me. My parents were unusual. My father was extremely hard of hearing, and so he spent most of his time either reading books or telling me what was in the books that he was reading because he kinda had to control the conversation 'cause he couldn't really hear what anyone else was saying. But he had a library filled with books, ranging from topics of history and science, including esoteric
Judaism and Kabbalah and the ghost stories of Isaac Bashevis Singer -- many things. Both my parents loved the theater, and despite the fact that my pursuit of the theater as an actress and a director often meant that I was rehearsing and performing on the Sabbath, they encouraged me, loved what I was doing, and came to every single play that I ever did in my life.

I went to a Catholic Jesuit university in Chicago, and when I was there, I just expanded on my religious -- my love of religion, my love of God, and I began to read Catholic philosophers. And I read Teresa of Avila and Saint Bonaventure and Saint Augustine and Thomas Aquinas. And I had to go through these moments of confusion trying to reconcile the God that I had met through Orthodox Judaism with these brilliant thinkers who saw things in a completely different paradigm. I also sort of came to the realization that when I read the New Testament that the words that were ascribed to the Christ in there were in fact divine. So that led me to sort of embrace the idea that God speaks to many different -- through many different religions.

I know my time is up, so I -- when I was in graduate school, someone introduced me to Buddhism, and I was practicing Nichiren Buddhism and began to understand the ideas of karma and reincarnation that way. My understanding and love of ecumenical practice has allowed me to develop a personal religious credo that later on, through my study of science and naturopathic medicine, has led me to a very personal religious belief against vaccinations as they are currently recommended and practiced by the CDC and in the world today.
SENATOR ABRAMS (13TH): I'm sorry Dr. Gale, I'm gonna have to stop you -- I apologize but to keep everything fair.

DR. HANNAH GALE: Yeah.

SENATOR ABRAMS (13TH): But thank you very much for your testimony. Are there any questions or comments? Yes, Representative.

REP. HAYES (51ST): Thank you, Doctor, for being here. We've heard a lot about religious exemptions here tonight. I guess I have to ask this question.

DR. HANNAH GALE: Sure.

REP. HAYES (51ST): A child -- a child that takes a religious exemption, are they more dangerous to anybody than someone that takes a medical exemption and is not vaccinated?

DR. HANNAH GALE: So, it's just simply that you cannot pass to anyone a disease that you do not have. To not be vaccinated against a disease does not mean that you have it. So -- no is the answer.

REP. HAYES (51ST): That's what I thought. Thank you.

DR. HANNAH GALE: Thank you. [Laughing]

SENATOR ABRAMS (13TH): Thank you, Representative. Senator Kelly.
SENATOR KELLY (21ST): Good afternoon, Doctor, and thank you for your comments. As a naturopath, are you required to comply with HIPAA?

DR. HANNAH GALE: Yes.

SENATOR KELLY (21ST): What happens if a medical provider does not follow HIPAA and makes disclosure of confidential medical information?

DR. HANNAH GALE: You can lose your license. You should lose your license because you are entrusted with very personal information, and you are responsible for keeping it private.

SENATOR KELLY (21ST): So then somebody who -- I'll strike that. Now, do you know whether or not notary publics, town clerks -- are they HIPAA compliant?

DR. HANNAH GALE: Of course, no. They have no training as to what HIPAA even is.
SENATOR KELLY (21ST): And what is HIPAA?

DR. HANNAH GALE: HIPAA is a privacy act from the federal government that prohibits a medical professional from revealing any personal medical information. Even the fact that someone is your patient is actually private medical information.

SENATOR KELLY (21ST): And why is it so important that we keep medical history and medical information regarding a patient's medical history private and confidential?

DR. HANNAH GALE: Because of the fear of prejudice. There are so many possible things that could be used
against someone by industries that don't mean them well, industries that might use that information to save money, insurance -- things that someone might be targeted for that would be unfair to them and prejudicial.

SENATOR KELLY (21ST): Are nurses required to follow HIPAA laws?

DR. HANNAH GALE: Yes, they are.

SENATOR KELLY (21ST): Thank you. I have no further questions.

DR. HANNAH GALE: Thank you.

SENATOR ABRAMS (13TH): Thank you. Any other questions or comments from the committee? Thank you very much for your testimony.

DR. HANNAH GALE: Thank you.

SENATOR ABRAMS (13TH): Rick Duenas [phonetic]. Is Rick Duenas here? Okay, we're gonna move on. Dr. Richard Adamson. Dr. Richard Adamson? Thank you. Thank you, sir. If you could introduce yourself and tell us where you're from.

DR. RICHARD ADAMSON: Good afternoon. Yes. Thank you, Chairwoman Linehan and Senator Abrams -- Co-Chair. I'm Dr. Richard Adamson. I'm president of TPM Associates. That's a firm that does consulting and research in toxicology, pharmacology, and nutrition. I'm a toxicologist and pharmacologist. I'm here on behalf of the American Beverage Association, which is located in Washington D.C.
I'm here to testify against House Bill 7007, AN ACT PROHIBITING THE SALE OF ENERGY DRINKS TO PERSONS OF 16 YEARS AND UNDER.

I am extremely familiar with caffeine and other ingredients commonly used in energy drinks, including carbohydrates, guarana, taurine, gluconolactone, B vitamins, and the other things in energy drinks. I worked at the National Institute of Health for over three decades. I have personally done research on caffeine.

I submitted copies of my entire testimony for the record, and I will submit to you a few conclusions, but before doing that I want to say that I wanna congratulate the students of City Hill Middle school because it is encouraging to see active young participants in the legislative process. As a grandfather, which I am, it is encouraging that the younger generation is taking an active interest in issues they care about, but as a scientist, as a medical scientist, I am particularly encouraged by their interest in this subject. I can offer additional information about energy drinks and continue this thoughtful conversation.

The points I wanna make are, first of all, government and food agencies worldwide, and this includes the FDA and Health Canada, recognizes that mainstream energy drinks are safe for consumption. Secondly, energy drinks contain about half -- again, let me say that clearly, about half the caffeine from a coffeehouse, this would include drinks such as Starbucks, Dunkin' Donuts, and other coffee houses, and they contain approximately the same amount that you have in the coffee, or lower, than
the coffee you brewed today and had in your own home. Caffeine, whether it's synthetic or natural, in contrast to what the students say, chemically and physiologically has exactly the same effect, and your body would not know whether you took in orally synthetic or naturally occurring caffeine.

The organization that I represent, the American Beverage Association, whose behalf I am here today, their companies, which produce about 95% of the energy drinks, put mandatory labeling requirements on the front of all their products. They voluntarily declare the total amount of caffeine, which is on the label. They also put on the label that energy drinks are not intended for children, pregnant or nursing women, or women or others that are sensitive to caffeine. They pledge that they will not market their energy drink products to children under 12 years of age, and in addition, they do not market or sell their products in schools.

Lastly, we believe that information and choices are the tools to support parents as well as teens, so that they can learn to make the choices for them while they move into adulthood. Thank you very much for your time, and as I said, my entire testimony has been submitted.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Thank you very much. We appreciate your time here we open it up to the committee. You stated that a coffeehouse coffee has half the amount of caffeine -- or rather that energy drinks have half the amount of caffeine than a coffeehouse coffee. Are we talking about amount of
caffeine per ounce, or are we talking apples and oranges with this?

DR. RICHARD ABRAMSON: Both. Because most cans, for example -- I don't wanna give any particular -- but I will say since you probably will have testimony later today from Red Bull, they have an 8-ounce can, but even a 16-ounce can or ounce per ounce, most coffeehouses have 20 mg per mL. Most energy drinks have 10 mg of caffeine per mL, and if it's an 8-ounce can, then they have 80 mg. If it's a 16-ounce can, like other manufacturers such as Monster, they have 160 mg. Anyway, so it's ounce per ounce or total.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): And then, the energy drinks that you're talking about, both Monster and Red Bull, how many servings come in a can. In a 16-ounce can, that generally is one serving. In an 8-ounce can, that's one serving. And, if you have a 16-ounce cup of coffee, which is a large, but most Starbucks is a 20 ounce, but you can have a 16 or an 8 ounce. So, ounce per ounce or a total -- small can or large can -- the coffeehouse coffee has double the amount of caffeine.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Okay. Thank you. Are there any questions from committee members? Seeing none. Thank you very much for your time. I'd like to call Lori Flaherty from the Association of School Nurses, and then we have Karen Packtor and Anne Hulick on deck. Thank you. Hi, welcome to the committee.

LORI FLAHERTY: Hi. Thank you. Thank you for lettin' me have the opportunity to speak on behalf of the School Nurses Association of Connecticut. As
you probably assume, we are in support of House Bill 7005.

So, I am a registered nurse. I have been a school nurse for over 14 years and now sit currently in a supervisory position. It is up to the school -- school district that you function in -- whether a school nurse can and will sign the exemption form. So, many nurses do not have an objection with a parent choosing if they want to claim religious exemption or not. What most nurses have an opposition to is that their signature is on the form. Many nurses feel that they are the last to be handed the information. There is not the ability to discuss with a parent why a school nurse would want vaccinations, why -- what the harm could be if they're not or if they are. There's no room for discussion. It is put in front of the nurse to sign. If a signature is required, and it's a medical signature that is required, it should come from the primary care provider, who at that time would be able to address the parent's questions and concerns and work with the parent whether they choose to vaccinate or not. That is what we're in support of.

As a professional nurse, one of our responsibilities is to advocate for children -- all children -- whether they're vaccinated, whether they're unvaccinated, whether they're immunocompromised. We have to look at the health of the whole school population. So, we are in support of House Bill 7005. Thank you.
REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Thank you very much for your testimony. Are there any questions from our membership? Yes, Senator.

SENATOR KELLY (21ST): Thank you very much, and thank you, Lori, for being with us this afternoon and coming. I think it's important that we get school nurses' perspective on the issue, and I'm gonna stay on the line of what I've been asking. First and foremost, are school nurses required to follow HIPAA laws?

LORI FLAHERTY: Absolutely. It's confidentiality.

SENATOR KELLY (21ST): Correct. And it's confidential, wouldn't you agree, because people in America have a right to keep their medical information private?

LORI FLAHERTY: Absolutely.

SENATOR KELLY (21ST): Now, I can understand the reticence of school nurses to the whole issue of an acknowledgement, which the 2015 General Assembly put into the law and required that this happened on an annual basis, which actually added the burden to what I think -- and I think you'd agree -- is already a full schedule for a school nurse on a daily basis -- that you have a lot of things to deal with. But would there be an alternative that might be acceptable, such as either only doing it once, like the law was before -- would that help?

LORI FLAHERTY: Currently, it is with admission to a school and then in seventh grade. What we are seeing from a nursing perspective when we enter data
from a health assessment is that a religious exemption is not across the board. You may have children who are vaccinated for some vaccines, and then a religious exemption are chosen for other vaccines. So, to answer your question, if the [background noise] -- how do I wanna say it -- if a exemption form is signed, is it for all vaccines or only certain vaccines? And that's -- currently that's the way it is. It's a pick or choose choice. It's not for all. So, you can have a immunization on let's say flu for the preschoolers, but then have all your other vaccines.

SENATOR KELLY (21ST): Okay. But not getting into the specifics of why somebody would choose one vaccination over another, I'm looking more at the acknowledgement aspect of this. Could --

LORI FLAHERTY: Would it be easier if one -- if you had one and served that child for 12 years of school?

SENATOR KELLY (21ST): Correct.

LORI FLAHERTY: Absolutely.

SENATOR KELLY (21ST): Okay. Or even to alleviate the school nurse having to sign this, wouldn't -- if we required the parent to just sign a form under penalties of perjury, then the school nurse doesn't have to get into the picking and choosing, but we just leave everything on the parent and the family themselves ["Absolutely" in background] and keeping the information private.
LORI FLAHERTY: The signature -- the nurse's signature -- does not agree or disagree with a parent.

SENATOR KELLY (21ST): Right. Yeah, and it's the acknowledgement aspect, but --

LORI FLAHERTY: Right -- that this is the person who claims that they are signing the form.

SENATOR KELLY (21ST): Right, but you would agree that if we just took the nurse out of that acknowledgement and put in penalties of perjury that would get us to a better place for school nurses and for families.

LORI FLAHERTY: Yes.

SENATOR KELLY (21ST): Thank you. No further questions.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Thank you very much. Are there any other questions from membership? Representative Turco.

REP. TURCO (27TH): Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you very much for your testimony.

LORI FLAHERTY: You're welcome.

REP. TURCO (27TH): So, you represent the Association of School Nurses?

LORI FLAHERTY: For Connecticut.
REP. TURCO (27TH): And that is a statewide organization?

LORI FLAHERTY: Yes.

REP. TURCO (27TH): And how many nurses are part of the association?

LORI FLAHERTY: I don’t really have an exact answer -- like a couple hundred or more.

REP. TURCO (27TH): But it's -- it's basically every municipality and every school that's part of the association.

LORI FLAHERTY: Every school nurse in Connecticut, yes.

REP. TURCO (27TH): Okay. And your association, I guess, the board had a discussion, and together you decided you wanted to be -- nurses should be removed from having to sign this statement of acknowledgement?

LORI FLAHERTY: Because in 2015 it was just kind of quickly added at the very end.

REP. TURCO (27TH): Okay. All right. Oh, this is relatively new, you said, that nurses have been included -- 2015, is that what you said?

LORI FLAHERTY: 2015, yeah.

REP. TURCO (27TH): Okay. So, and now the nurses would like to be removed there's conflicts and
issues on why they don't wanna have to do this, and you're asking to be removed?

LORI FLAHERTY: But what I've heard from many of the testimonies today is that parents talk about rapport with the school nurse. Signature or not, the rapport is developed from the parent and the -- from the parent and the nurse -- it shouldn't have anything to do with a signature.

REP. TURCO (27TH): Yeah. Can a parent now get a statement acknowledged from their pediatrician? I don't see them listed as one of the people that they can. No?

LORI FLAHERTY: It's not a medical -- no, it's not on the form.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Representative, to the best of my knowledge, they are not listed as -- on the religious exemption, but they can sign for a medical exemption.

LORI FLAHERTY: That's correct.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): There are two exemptions in the state of Connecticut, a medical exemption and a religious exemption.

REP. TURCO (27TH): Oh, got ya, got ya. So, that seems odd to me that we're making the school nurse sign for the religious exemption.

LORI FLAHERTY: That's correct.

REP. TURCO (27TH): Okay.
LORI FLAHERTY: It should be the primary care provider who can address any concerns that the parent may have for or against vaccines.

REP. TURCO (27TH): Okay. Well, I thank you very much for coming and testifying and clarifying this 'cause we heard from a lot of people. I really wanted to hear from the nurses, and now that I know, you know, that the nurses do not want to be part of this, I really appreciate knowing that. Thank you very much.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Are there any other --?

Representative Kokoruda.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): Thank you for your testimony. Thank you, Madam Chair. I was here in 2015 when we discussed that bill, and I do remember the nurses being sorta put on the end. I'm a justice of the peace. I perform maybe 15-20 weddings a year. Potentially, I was gonna be on that list. I couldn't believe it. It made no sense at all. So, I think we were just kinda looking for a solution to a problem that we don't know even really exists. So, I -- I certainly understand what you're saying, but I would much rather have a nurse at least, who has some confidentiality requirements, than a justice of the peace that has no training at all.

So, it's a dilemma, but I think -- I think nurses got pulled in when they were just tryin' to change the law a little bit and they couldn't come up with an answer. I know a lot of things were thrown out there, and I was amazed that a justice of the peace
-- which you don't have to do anything to be a justice of the peace -- was being put in there. Seriously. So, anyway, thank you for your testimony. I think it's a problem, and I understand but we're gonna have to find an answer that parents feel comfortable that someone -- somebody, whoever is that person, if it can't be direct, which I know has been recommended -- I just don't see where it could possibly not be a nurse and be a priest or a minister. It just is really a -- we seem to be just grabbing at straws to make a change in the way we deal with this issue. So, thank you for your testimony.

LORI FLAHERTY: You're welcome.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Are there any other questions from the committee? If you don't mind. When I was out in the community discussing the genesis of this bill, I did get to speak to quite a few school nurses, one of which had mentioned to me that they felt that their job was in jeopardy if they were to try to have that conversation with a parent about those pick and choose religious exemptions. They told that to me directly, but I'm wondering have you heard that from anyone in your membership?

LORI FLAHERTY: I think what I've heard mostly is that there's really no -- no door opened to discuss the vaccines. I do sign -- I do sign a lot of -- in my schools, I do have some religious exemptions. The decision from the parent is already made. We're there to witness a signature. [Background talking] We're there to witness a signature. We are not there to make judgment, and really a part of the
profession is to remain professional. Let's face that. You know, every profession you're gonna have somebody who has an opposition that they feel, but really, a true professional should not reflect their own personal beliefs on another person. The nurse is signing the signature. The medical component should be discussed, and it really should be with the primary care provider, who knows that patient, who knows that family.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Excellent. Thank you. And one last call for questions. Seeing none. Thank you very much for coming today.

LORI FLAHERTY: Thank you.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Would Rick Duenas come to testify please? Hi. And after that, we will go to Anne Hulick and then Jennifer Kozek [phonetic]. Thank you.

RICK DUENAS: Thank you very much. Representative Linehan, Senator Abrams, members of the Committee on Children, I'm here to comment on HB 7004, AN ACT CONCERNING CONCUSSION EDUCATION FOR COACHES OF YOUTH ATHLETIC ACTIVITIES. I'm here to speak on behalf of Dr. Joanne Santiago, the president of the Connecticut Chiropractic Association and of course the members of the Connecticut Chiropractic Association.

There are three revisions to this law, and two of these revisions raise our concern. There is a requirement for each youth -- youth coach to complete the online concussion course for youth sports from the National Centers for Disease Control
and Prevention only once -- with no requirement to update their knowledge on the subject. Since science is always evolving, and current information may be outdated in a short time, it is unreasonable, we feel, and partly unsafe for youth athletes if a coach has not -- has not updated their knowledge of concussions. Allowing coaches to lose their knowledge base of current concussion information, we feel is illogical. And in the same way that healthcare professionals are required to maintain continuing education on a regular basis, there should be a requirement for coaches to do the same -- perhaps every three years, or whatever is reasonable.

The second item we are concerned about is the protection from civil liability for youth coaches who have not taken the required course. It doesn't seem to make sense if the objective is to ensure coaches are cognizant of current concussion issues in youth athletics and can be expected to recognize a dangerous situation for the concussed youth athlete. It's sets up, we believe, a false sense of assurance to the parents or guardians of youth athletes that all coaches will take the concussion training program, yet cannot be held accountable for failing to take the course. We do not believe it is reasonable. How could this be a requirement for youth athletic coaches of youth athletic activities to take an online course when there is no consequence if they fail to comply?

I'd also like to point out that with respect to concussion policy in this state, chiropractic physicians, who are clearly qualified to provide such services as return-to-play and also qualified
to sit on policy boards to help make concussion policies, have been left out of the process since its inception in 2010. We feel that it is essential to bring chiropractic doctors back into the play -- back onto the playing field to level the playing field, so to speak, so that individuals, youth athletes, their parents/guardians can select their chiropractic physician to ascertain when that athlete can return to play. We also believe that chiropractic -- a chiropractic representative from a chiropractic organization should be sitting at the table with those other groups or members that -- who write concussion policy, including the Department of Education, Department of Public Health, Connecticut State Medical Society, Connecticut Athletic Trainers Association, ["Thank you very much" in background] and the CIAC.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Thank you very much. I'm sorry that we have to interrupt just to keep it fair for everybody here today.

RICK DUENAS: Oh, yes.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): I thank you very much for your testimony. Something that you said actually makes a lot of sense, and you said that there's no requirement to update the knowledge. If we were to add substitute language to this bill, what amount of time do you think is reasonable? Did you say three -- every three years?

RICK DUENAS: Three years -- that's what I put up, you know, arbitrarily.
REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Arbitrarily -- so, if we strengthen that, it might be even better right?

RICK DUENAS: Yeah, every two years -- every two-four years.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Okay. I'm just trying to gauge on how quickly -- quickly the science is updated. And --

RICK DUENAS: The science is pretty much updated on a weekly basis perhaps or --

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): So a -- so a yearly requirement would be -- would work well?

RICK DUENAS: Yeah, it would work well probably, yes. You can't expect the coaches to be, you know, concussion experts.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): And have you viewed the CDC video that --?

RICK DUENAS: I have viewed it for -- for providers. I have not viewed it for coaches.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Do we know if that's -- it must be a little different because it uses different terminology most likely?

RICK DUENAS: Probably it is.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Have you had the opportunity to look at other videos that teach about concussions and concussion education and how to recognize it?
RICK DUENAS: For coaches?

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): For coaches or for anyone.

RICK DUENAS: Videos itself -- just courses -- I have, you know, taken courses myself.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): The reason I ask is, do you feel that the CDC version is comprehensive, a really good version for coaches, or would there be something better out there?

RICK DUENAS: Well, for coaches, I didn't -- I did not view it.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Right, okay. So in your, so --

RICK DUENAS: So, as far as for providers, I think -- I think the one they have for providers could be improved vastly, yes.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): That's what I was looking for actually -- to find out if we think that there might be some better way to get this information to the coaches, and so we'll be looking at that. I appreciate that.

RICK DUENAS: Sure, I think -- and again, those who are making policy, the Department of Education, Public Health, CIAC, State Medical Society have to have chiropractic doctors at the table because chiropractic doctors have been very much involved with athletics and with the whole general population, and you're leaving out a vital aspect of professional -- professional expertise on this
matter. We have -- there's a chiropractic doctor who runs the -- the -- he's a medical director at the U.S. Olympic Training Center. He runs the whole show there. You had a chiropractic doctor run a traumatic brain injury symposium back in 2014 or so. So, we're very much on the edge of proper protocols.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): And that's duly noted. Thank you very much.

RICK DUENAS: Thank you very much.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Are there any questions from the committee? No. Thank you, sir.

RICK DUENAS: Thank you.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Anne Hulick. Thank you very much for being here today.

ANNE HULICK: Thank you very much. Good afternoon, Representative Linehan, Senator Abrams, Ranking Members Kelly and Green, and distinguished members of the Children's Committee. My name is Anne Hulick, I'm the Connecticut director for Clean Water Action, which is an environmental advocacy organization. I also coordinate the Coalition for a Safe and Healthy Connecticut. I've been a nurse for many, many years -- about 30 years -- and over the last eight years, I have been focused on environmental health policy.

The Connecticut Coalition for a Safe and Healthy Connecticut is a diverse advocacy group that for ten years now has worked on raising awareness on the health and environmental impacts of toxic chemicals
in products, both at the state and federal level. We -- I am here today to submit and speak to House Bill 7003, AN ACT CONCERNING A MORATORIUM ON RECYCLED TIRE RUBBER MULCH IN PLAYGROUNDS. There's a number of reasons to be concerned about the health and environmental impacts of recycled rubber tire mulch, and we rely heavily on the expertise of our colleagues, physicians, pediatricians, and doctorally-prepared researchers at Children's Environmental Health Center at Mount Sinai in New York, who have done extensive research on this particular issue.

The team at Mount Sinai acknowledges that there are significant gaps in the research on recycled tire mulch and stated, "Given the hazards associated with recycled tire rubber, it is our recommendation that these surfaces never be used where children play." And they outlined the reasons for that conclusion, which I'm summarizing here, and I'll share with you their full document.

So, the toxic chemicals in rubber tire mulch are numerous. They are not standardized in all of the products. They contain styrene and butadiene. Styrene is a neurotoxic chemical and a probable human carcinogen. Butadiene is also a human carcinogen linked to leukemia and lymphoma. Tires can also include cadmium and lead, both of which are neurotoxic, as I know you are aware, and many polyaromatic hydrocarbons and other harmful chemicals.

Children are not just small adults. They are uniquely vulnerable. Their brains and nervous systems are developing at very rapid rates, and
research now shows that they are uniquely susceptible to chemical exposures. Frankly, this is research that has evolved over the last 20 to 30 years. Even when I started in nursing school, we were -- we assumed that the placenta and the blood-brain barrier was a barrier to chemicals. We know now unequivocally that is not true.

A report that I referenced in my testimony called, The TENDR Report -- again, I have reference linked in my testimony -- documented consensus among numerous physicians and scientific researchers that we "are witnessing an alarming increase in learning and behavioral problems in children," and that statement goes on and they urged an immediate call to action to reduce unnecessary exposures.

I know I'm out of time, but the other concerns about recycled rubber tire mulch are the sources of exposure have not been fully studied in children, but from the studies that Mount Sinai referenced, we know that children are exposed through ingestion, dermal absorption, and inhalation. And I know someone on the committee asked earlier about extreme heat. There have been studies on heat from these fields, and on warm days, temperatures have been found to exceed 160 degrees. Children do not have the ability to regulate their body temperatures as we as adults do. They can get extremely dehydrated very, very quickly, and they are prone to dehydration, heat stroke, and serious consequences from extreme heat, including burns.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Thank you very much. I'm sorry.
ANNE HULICK: That's okay.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): I'm sorry. I have to cut you off in the interest of fairness everywhere. I do have some questions. We had someone in earlier who represented the tire industry and said that there were scientific papers that had said that these were not carcinogens. I honestly can't remember if I asked who funded those papers, but now you are coming in and stating that there are -- there has been proof that these are harmful chemicals. So, of the -- of the papers that have been submitted on this, in general, do you have any information on how many have said they are indeed carcinogens and how many have said they are not.

ANNE HULICK: so, I don't have a number of the papers in -- in my head, but there's no question that the chemicals in tires contain carcinogens, neurotoxins, and volatile organic compounds. That's -- we know that. In fact, if you think about it, tires can't just be disposed in a landfill, right? And why is that? It's because they're toxic. So, the fact that we grind them up and assume that by doing so and putting them in other form takes all of those chemicals away is just frankly ludicrous.

So, we know those chemicals are in the tires. We know those chemicals are in the infill rubber mulch. The issue where the research has had gaps over the years, and I think this is where all the dispute and, you know, questions have come from is that there have not been good studies -- many replicable good studies -- on how children, in particular, are exposed, and then what the lifelong impact of that exposure is. So, the researchers and pediatricians
at Mount Sinai, in their analysis of all the studies that have been done, pointed out that there still remain those gaps, but they said that given -- even despite that -- that the fact that these chemicals are now in -- you know, in this material where children are sitting, playing, eating, putting their fingers in their mouth, rolling -- that those children are being unnecessarily exposed to chemicals that we know are neurotoxic and carcinogenic. So, their conclusion is that, as I said, and that was a quote that, "given the hazards associated rubber, it is our recommendation that these surfaces never be used where children play." And they submitted that very statement, and I apologize, I will bring it to you. I didn't send it in today, but I will get it to all of you. They submitted that to this committee two years in a row for this exact same bill, and they continue to feel that way to this day.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Thank you very much, and I did have a question earlier that the other person testifying was not able to answer. So, now I'm gonna pose that to you. Do you feel that there would be -- or does the science show that there's a difference between the mulch, the ripped up pieces that then go through friction, right -- 'cause that's -- we know that that makes the chemicals fly off, right, okay -- so the volatility of the mobile mulch is what I'm talking about -- is that any different than the poured rubber that is used for wheelchair access for children on playgrounds?

ANNE HULICK: I -- I will look at more research on that particular question for you, but what I do know in talking with the researchers and physicians at
Mount Sinai is that they are concerned about the rubber mulch because actually -- they're concerned about both, but they're concerned about the -- the crunched up recycled mulch because by doing that is the surface area of those, you know, particles or materials, those chunks, and yes, can cause actual increase in those chemicals, exposing people on -- or children on those playgrounds.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Thank you very much. Are there any questions from members of the committee? Representative Hampton.

REP. HAMPTON (16TH): Thank you, Madam Chair. Hi, Anne. It's good to see you. It's always great to get your input on any issue. Maybe this was answered before. One question is, do you know how many schools in the state have gone this way to -- off the top of your head? I know one of my schools has.

ANNE HULICK: Yeah. I don't, only because it's really hard to get that number. I'm gonna try to get it for you. It's changing all the time. A lot of schools have. I think what I wanna make clear about this particular bill -- I think what you're asking in this bill is a moratorium on future installations, not to take up those installations that have already put down. And I think by doing it that way, you are being -- taking precautionary measures. I mean, as a nurse, I'm taught to use the precautionary principle. When there is evidence of harm, we -- we, you know, try to avoid risk. So, this bill, I think, is a good proactive health protective measure that will, you know, at least prevent more exposures till the science is, you
know, unequivocally determined to go one way or the other. I'm sorry I don't have it, but I'll be happy to try to get that for you.

REP. HAMPTON (16TH): No, thank you, and as a followup, are you seeing best practices in other states -- what they're doing as alternatives to these -- to these crumb rubber?

ANNE HULICK: Yes, and there are increasingly more types of products coming on to the market that are -- contain nontoxic chemicals, like coconut hulls and things like that, so very creative ways to have a synthetic field that aren't -- that don't contain toxic chemicals.

REP. HAMPTON (16TH): Thank you so much. Thank you, Madam Chair.

ANNE HULICK: Thank you.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Of course. Are there any other questions? Yes, Representative Kokoruda.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): Thank you, Madam Chairman. Anne, nice to see you.

ANNE HULICK: Nice to see you, Representative.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): Anne, a couple of things. We'd love to see that report you were referring to. That'd be great.

ANNE HULICK: Yes, and I'm sorry I didn't submit it earlier.
REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): No, that's fine. That's fine. Can you just -- let's go a little further on Representative Hampton's point. What other state has this moratorium?

ANNE HULICK: Oh, I'm not aware that a state has a moratorium. I am aware that increasingly more and more towns in states are passing municipal ordinances. So, I'm sorry if I didn't answer your question.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): You know, actually, a town next door to me -- actually, the senator just left -- they did cork.

ANNE HULICK: Yes, cork is another one.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): Guilford, Connecticut, put that in their new high school turf field. But, I just wanna clarify -- Representative Linehan, you did ask the question to the previous testifier about who paid for the studies and who did the studies. You did ask, and it was -- it was stated clearly that they weren't paid for by anybody in the industry. I think that was -- that is on the record now.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Thank you. I didn't remember. Sometimes I ask it in my head. [Laughing]

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): It's an important question. Well, it's an important question, and I think we got a good answer to it. But Anne, thank you very much.
ANNE HULICK: You're very welcome. Thank you all very much.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Thank you. Jennifer Kozek, then up next we have Glenn Lungarini.

JENNIFER KOZEK: Hi. Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you so much, committee members. I am Jennifer Kozek, and I am from New Haven, Connecticut. And I'm here to oppose Bill 7005 as well. A lot of things have already been said here today, so as to avoid to be completely redundant I'm gonna try to keep it short. But basically, one is to let you know that my religious beliefs prevent me from using products such as vaccinations, which contain many harmful toxic and synthetic ingredients. I just find it fascinating sitting here and the irony of talking about toxic ingredients that we can eat, toxic ingredients that we can drink, and yet, you know, when we talk about formaldehyde and baby cells being injected into the blood stream of our children, somehow that discussion doesn't wanna happen, so. But secondly, I'm here to strongly oppose this threat to my medical and religious -- more my religious freedom today. I'm asking you to please eliminate this bill. I pray that you will keep the best interest of our freedoms when you make your decision. Taking our religious exemption is fundamentally wrong and against our First Amendment rights, as spoken here many, many times over.

I also -- you know we talk about legislative creep, I thought it was fascinating that the American Academy of Pediatrics would weigh in on our religious exemption. And when we talk about funds
and who's funding what studies and what happens, I just want everyone in this room to know that in light of the pharmaceutical companies basically fund -- they're the biggest funders and the biggest sponsors. The pharmaceutical companies are the Academy of Pediatrics' biggest sponsors. I ask that you strike their statement or at least weigh it very lightly. It is an absolute egregious conflict of interest that the American Academy of Pediatrics would speak on behalf of our religious exemption.

The Academy of Pediatrics, which was created in 1930, was an independent forum for the health and well-being of our children. However, this is no longer the case. If you look at the corporate Friends of Children Fund members -- that includes Pfizer, Merck, Sanofi Pasteur, the vaccine company group, and Johnson and Johnson. And so, they have an absolute tryst to come in to look at our legislature and notice that this bill is up and just run in there right away with their recommendation to completely take away our religious freedom. So, for that, I ask you to please, please strike this bill. Thank you.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Thank you very much. Oh, we might have questions. Are there any questions? [Laughing] Don't run. Don't go. Are there any questions from the committee? Okay, now you can go. Thank you very much for being here today. Glenn Lungarini.

GLENN LUNGARINI: Representative Linehan, Senator Abrams, committee members, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you this afternoon. I am Glenn Lungarini, the executive director of the
Connecticut Association of Schools and CAS-CIAC. Our organization represents just under 1,000 elementary, middle, and high schools and from the CIAC end is also the governing body of interscholastic high school athletics. I come to you this afternoon to speak on HB 7003 and HB 7004. In both of those bills, CIAC and CAS would like to offer our support of both of those bills with a request for a technical amendment in one and a clarification in another.

In HB 7004, AN ACT CONCERNING CONCUSSION EDUCATION FOR COACHES OF YOUTH ATHLETICS. Again, we support that position, and this is an effort that has been engaged in by CIAC, the State Department of Education, and a lot of great work done by the Connecticut Association of Athletic Directors in creating coaching modules around concussions for quite some time. We ask that in lines 16 through 18 of that act -- currently it excludes colleges and universities -- for clarification, we would also request that in lines 16 through 18 we identify that youth athletic activity does not include interscholastic athletic activity, which is governed by CIAC and/or requires the coach to hold a permit issued by the Department of Education, as required by Connecticut State Statute 10-149b. Our rationale for doing that is currently to hold that Connecticut coaching permit. The coach needs to undergo a three-hour concussion training course. In addition to that, the coach receives annual updates on that, which is a two-page item accompanied by a video, which is signed off on by the athletic director. And every five years, upon renewing their coaching permit, the coaches are required to undergo updated concussion training in its entirety again.
So, with that, we feel that the standard that we currently have exceeds what the CDC is recommending, and we wouldn't want there to be confusion that coaches would simply have to abide by what we see as something that diminishes the efforts that we currently have. And that's because, in that bill, the youth are identified as ages 7 to 18, so they would fall within that middle and high school age group that are participating.

In HB 7003, again, we support that position, just asking for the technical clarification that municipal playgrounds does not incorporate athletic fields and that the provision would not prevent schools or boards of education that currently have playgrounds from maintenance of those playgrounds moving forward. Thank you.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Thank you very much for being here today, and thank you for your testimony. Let's start with the crumb rubber. So, what you are asking -- I just wanna clarify and make sure I've got it -- is that the moratorium doesn't include servicing those fields, and if I remember correctly, it doesn't actually include those fields at all. We're talking about playgrounds, municipal and school playgrounds, and I don't think that that is considered a playground, it's a field. But, in that, you don't see language that -- I didn't see language that would prohibit you from servicing that. It's about a moratorium on things being built, but you're making sure that we don't stop you from servicing them -- 'cause I understand that sometimes they have to be like refilled.
GLENN LUNGARINI: You answered both of my questions. That was simply the clarification we were looking for.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): And we will -- we will double check that that is in fact the case, and we will provide clarification for everyone in the committee. Additionally, let's go to the concussion. You -- the CIAC provides how long of a course?

GLENN LUNGARINI: Sure. The requirement is per the Connecticut Statute 10-149b, which covers coaching, education -- the issuing of five-year coaching permits. So, with that, coaches are required to take a three-hour concussion module that is part of their initial certification, and then there is an annual concussion review that is accompanied by a two-page document that is updated on an annual basis, which is also accompanied with a video tutorial, which is anywhere between about 20 to 30 minutes to view, so it's similar to what the CDC's length would be in that. And then, every five years, the coaches are required to go through training again that is more extensive, which is about an hour long and builds upon those annual updates that have been issued.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): And would those updates and the half-an-hour -- 20 to 30-minute video and then the other updates -- would those make sense to someone who did not take the three-hour course?

GLENN LUNGARINI: I think they -- it probably would because it's updated information, and I don't think it's stand-alone information. I'm sorry -- I think it is stand-alone information. It's updates, as a
gentleman that testified previously, that, you know, that the information is constantly being updated, and that's what we're -- our effort is to try to keep coaches as up-to-date as possible with that understanding of concussion management.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): And, you might not have this information, but the CDC video, is that often updated?

GLENN LUNGARINI: I don't know. You know, again, the recommendations from the CDC are fairly recent. We do believe in review of that -- that one has been in place in Connecticut since 2011 and then updated in 2014 -- that our standards currently exceed what the CDC's asks for. So, from an interscholastic athletic perspective and what the state has already done, I think that we're ahead of the game as far as that goes.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): I wanna thank you for the work that the CIAC has done regarding concussions. As a legislator, I think that sometimes you go above and beyond, and we appreciate it. As a mom of a child who has had a concussion and then who had secondary concussion syndrome and had coaches who didn't understand that my daughter had, I thank you. And as a former athlete who has had a concussion, I thank you on that level as well. Are there any questions from the committee? No. Thank you very much.

GLENN LUNGARINI: Thank you.
REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Okay, we'd like to have Art Dodge come please, and then on-deck would be Jocelyn H. [phonetic] and Jim Williams. Thank you.

ARTHUR DODGE: Chairmen Abrams and Linehan, Senator Kelly and Representative Green, and members of the Children's Committee, my name is Arthur Dodge. I reside in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, and 'Sconset, Massachusetts. I hold a JD degree, an MBA degree, and I am a former three-time public elected official, so thank you for your service. I am used to this. I also am chairman and CEO of Ecore International, North America's largest producer of recycled rubber products. I am also a director of the Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries (ISRI) and co-founder of the Recycled Rubber Coalition, and I am here today to speak against HB 7003 and offer you my concerns.

I am not here today to debate the chemistry, the science around recycled rubber. I am neither a toxicologist, an epidemiologist, nor an oncologist. I do have 30-years' experience in the manufacture and recycling of rubber materials, and there is, frankly, no difference chemically between styrene, butadiene, and recycled rubber tires and the virgin rubber products made of styrene, butadiene rubber, ethylene propylene diene monomer, neoprene rubber, nitrile or countless other rubber compounds. Rubber polymers are ubiquitous. Vulcanized rubber is engineered to be unaffected by incidental contact with other materials. If the safety of recycled rubber is in doubt, then the safety of all rubber products is in doubt.

I am not here to belabor the point that since 2014, when Stephanie Gost did her five-minute expose on
NBC Nightly News providing a voice to Amy Griffin's since discredited assertions that female soccer players' exposure and ingestion of recycled rubber infill may be the proximate cause of lymphoma. There has not been a single shred of peer-reviewed scientific evidence to support any nexus between rubber exposure and pediatric cancer.

I am also not here to draw attention to the lawn care industry's hidden financial support to female soccer players and other organizations designed to intentionally raise concern about rubber safety and to promote natural grass surfaces in a veiled attempt to undermine public support and to boast -- boost the use of grass and the related use of weed-control chemicals and pesticides.

Most certainly, I am not here to discuss the fact that over the past 25 years, our organization has conducted thousands of tests in accordance with ASTM and EIN standards, and that Ecore's test library was provided to U.S. EPA in 2015 so as to provide EPA with baseline data on both virgin and recycled rubber emissions, as EPA had no other historic test data. Nor do I wanna point out that our tests conclusively show that there are no heavy metals used in U.S. tire production -- no lead, no cadmium, no arsenic -- and that the PAH levels in all rubber materials are far below those found in established EPA standards, let alone on grilled meat.

And I'm not here to highlight the hypocrisy of those who endorse this legislation, given that the Connecticut Department of Health and the U.S. Department of Health view both obesity and inactivity [ringing] as the greatest threat to
pediatric health and future adult cancer risk and that synthetic playground cover and sports fields provide all children with year-round access in all weather conditions, while alternatives do not.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Thank you very much. I appreciate your testimony. The bell rang. We're just trying to keep things fair. ["No problem --" in background] It's always hard to do that. Before I open it up to the committee, I have a question. You had said that there were no scientific peer-reviewed studies that indicate that the crumb rubber infill or playground is a carcinogen. Were those all pediatric studies? And we've heard from others that there just haven't been enough. So when you say there have been none that prove that there is a link, how many of those do you know that have been out there that have not shown a link?

ARTHUR DODGE: There have been over a hundred studies done that showed no link. There have been about 12 studies done on pediatric cases. The gaps that are being discussed are gaps in years. So, maybe these were done on six to nine but not on four to six, or not on one to two. So, now we're getting down to parsing out what age gaps exist in the studies, not have there been any studies done on children, just well we didn't do minority children between the ages of two and three. So, at the end of the day, if you wanna belabor this, you can do exhaustive testing and still not cover every possible conceivable ethnic group or age group or -- I mean, these are the gaps that people are now focusing on.
REP. LINEHAN (103RD): So, then let me ask this -- and we'll get back to that but -- you're talking about crumb rubber -- that there's no cadmium and you named a ton of chemicals, and then you said in U.S. tire production. Are you aware of -- do you know rather, how many of these crumb rubber playgrounds and fields are actually made with only U.S. tires -- U.S. made tires?

ARTHUR DODGE: So, we demand from our suppliers that we only source U.S. based tires. We know of companies that have also rejected foreign-made tires, or we test for that. So, we test every day.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): And are you the only company that creates these crumb rubber infills -- the playgrounds? Are you the only company sold here in Connecticut, around the United States that uses these tires?

ARTHUR DODGE: Not at all, but as a member of ISRI, we've established standards under both -- promulgated under both ASTM and EIN, which is European industry norms that have adopted standards that are rigorous testing standards, which look at heavy metal testing, look at PAH emissions. And to the extent that we certify and warranty our products to meet those standards, that imposes a legal liability upon the manufacturer to conform with those standards. All you have to do is basically specify that these products have to abide by these standards, and the warranty then falls back on the manufacturer that if there's shipping material that doesn't comply, the buyer has -- you know, has a right of action against that manufacturer.
REP. LINEHAN (103RD): And those are the companies that you represent that conform to these rigorous standards, but is there anything that states that any company that is creating these crumb rubber playgrounds or the infill -- is there anything that states that all of those businesses conform to those standards?

ARTHUR DODGE: You know, that's -- no, there is no industry -- I mean, there's no gospel that says that you have to do it but for the fact that you're then violating the principles under which you're shipping by. To the extent that any product conforms to written specifications and those specifications comply with industry norms, you either abide by them or you don't. If you don't, you're shipping defective product and you're liable to all the warranties and damages associated with shipping defective product.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): And going back to your statement about the peer-reviewed studies and the age gaps, this is not a ban on new build, it's a moratorium on new build until we get the EPA report, which has been held up for quite some time. And we have heard that the EPA report is expected to happen sometime later this year, in the second half of the year. Are you aware if the EPA report then answers those questions that you have that they in fact look at the pediatric effects and that they do so in all ages, from say birth to 18.

ARTHUR DODGE: No, if you look at the scope of the assignment given to EPA by Congress and the White House at the time that they were requested to revisit something the EPA had already investigated
three times, the scope of that review was limited to field exposure, to air -- to ambient air conditions, and then EPA came back to the administration and said "but you haven't funded us." So, there has been a back-and-forth between EPA and Congress on this as an unfunded request. I don't know how much work has actually been done by EPA given the fact that they came to us for our source data because they had no source data.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): And you're -- and so you had just said that the -- what the EPA is looking at was -- I'm sorry, can you repeat the testing that they're doing? You said it was --?

ARTHUR DODGE: The scope of their original request was to reevaluate whether or not the -- and I don't -- I didn't memorize the language, but basically they were asked to go back and evaluate the relative safety of rubber in light of its use in turf fields and playgrounds and exposure to children.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): But you -- you had mentioned -- you did not mention ingestion or inhalation.

ARTHUR DODGE: I don't believe that's part of the scope of the original request.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): And that is part of the concern that we have as a committee.

ARTHUR DODGE: But I'm not sure -- I'm not sure EPA's gonna give you that answer.

REP. BOYD (50TH): Hello. Thank you. One of the questions that, you know, I had before about the EPA report -- you said that the EPA has looked into this three times before. When was the last report that was issued?

ARTHUR DODGE: You know, don't hold me to this -- it was in the late '90s.

REP. BOYD (50TH): Okay -- late '90s -- and what was the gist of it?

ARTHUR DODGE: That -- in fact, so I have a letter from Bill Clinton to me personally thanking us for having brought recycled rubber to the White House because of their -- you know, this was Green Day and, you know, the whole movement in the early '90s.

REP. BOYD (50TH): Right.

ARTHUR DODGE: You know, I’m a reformed long-haired green guy that, you know, read E.F. Schumacher and the Club of Rome and started looking at rubber as one of these manmade materials that didn't have a -- a beneficial reuse. So, back in the '90s, you know, we were celebrated as one of the leading environmental companies for having solved a really difficult problem in finding out how to find beneficial reuses for rubber. So, EPA then conducted studies along with CPSC, specifically in running tracks, playgrounds, and turf fields to evaluate the safety and effectiveness and deemed
rubber to be safe and effective, and there was no issue. In fact, they promoted the use of rubber in playgrounds and turf infills. So, this was a -- the government was behind the initiative to use recycled rubber in most of these applications, you know, through 2000 -- well, through the Obama administration, right.

REP. BOYD (50TH): Right, well in my understanding, the directive to do a new report was at the end of the Obama administration, and it carried over into the Trump administration, and then it hasn't moved.

ARTHUR DODGE: President Obama saw an ESPN 360, you know, interview of Amy Griffin, who it has now been shown received money from the lawn care industry.

REP. BOYD (50TH): Okay. And does that last EPA report -- 'cause I've looked for it before, do you have a --?

ARTHUR DODGE: And, by the way, this is all Googleable, so you just have to go on computers and look it up.

REP. BOYD (50TH): Yeah, well -- well, what do you know -- Google. [Laughing] It would be helpful to us here if you happen to have a quick, easy link to it to send it our way 'cause --

ARTHUR DODGE: I was just showing it to one of my colleagues, so I can --

REP. BOYD (50TH): That would -- that would be great. So, thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair.
REP. LINEHAN (103RD): You're welcome. Are there any other questions? Thank you very much for coming today.

ARTHUR DODGE: Thank you.


Welcome to the committee. If you can state your name and where you're from, we'd appreciate that.

JOCELYN HOZWORTH [phonetic]: My name is Jocelyn Hozworth. I'm from Avon, and I wanna thank the committee for giving me the opportunity to come before you today with my testimony.

I am writing this testimonial in opposition to HB 7005, as I feel it is a direct infringement upon my religious freedom and constitutional rights. As a Christian, I believe in a superior spiritual being that I know is God. God created us in his image, Genesis 126, and armed us with an immune system to fight off disease. He has also provided us with a bounty of natural ways to boost our immune systems as well as remedies to fight and cure disease. According to the Bible, my body is a temple, and God intends for me to treat it that way. And as long as my children and grandchildren are under my care, I will treat their bodies as the temples that they are. This means that due to my own religious beliefs, I must keep my body as well as my children's bodies free from toxic substances or anything that I feel may be harmful to them in any
way. These decisions are made with the help of my God and his handbook.

That being said, this proposed bill is in conflict with my religious beliefs, as outlined in the above paragraph. By altering the role of school nurse from signing my religious exemption form as simply an acknowledgement of its receipt and verification of my identity to actually making judgment as to my religious beliefs and credibility is unconscionable to be. The nurse should in no way be involved in making any decisions for me or judging me or my religious beliefs. I am who I am, and what I say I am, a spiritual Christian.

As put forth in the Legal and Practical Issues for the School Nurse, a Global Approach, in a section that addresses vaccine exemptions, it says, "Statement to be acknowledged by judge, magistrate, court clerk, notary public, justice of the peace, Connecticut attorney, or school nurse." Statement "to be acknowledged by," not judged by, not declined by, deciding upon by, discussed with, or anything else that would trample on my religious freedoms. To reiterate, my religious decisions are made with my God, not my child's school nurse or my notary public.

By making a school nurse the judge and jury as to whether or not I qualify for or fit his or definition of what a religious exemption should be is a direct violation of the protection provided to me under the Constitution. I think we have gotten away from what the actual role of the school nurse is in the religious exemption process, and there should be a reeducation so that everyone is on the
same page and understands it is acknowledgement [ringing] only, not an adjudication. Thank you for listening to my voice and considering my thoughts and concerns. I pray that you will decide in favor of freedom of religion and the constitution in this matter. God bless you all.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Thank you very much for coming here today. We appreciate your testimony. Are there any questions? Hearing none. Thank you very much.

JENNIFER KOZEK: Thank you so much.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Jim Williams please, followed by John Herb and Jessica Y. Hello.

JIM WILLIAMS: Hi, I'm Jim Williams. I'm the government relations director for the American Heart Association, and I'm here to speak in favor of House Bill 7006, AN ACT PROHIBITING THE INCLUSION OF CERTAIN BEVERAGES ON CHILDREN'S MEALS.

Our lives are busy, and more and more, we're grabbing a meal on the run and eating out. That's why it's so important that restaurants offer healthy beverage options, especially for children. This bill makes it easier for Connecticut parents to help their kids to grow up in a healthy way. When passed, it will make healthy beverages, such as water, sparkling water, flavored water with no added sweeteners, unflavored milk or a non-dairy milk alternative, and we're also okay with adding 100 percent juice to that milk, the default choice on children's menus.
This bill also preserves parent choice. It is important to note that, should the bill pass, parents remain free to choose and purchase beverages that are not included in the offering of healthy choices on a children's menu, such as sugary drinks like sport drinks, fruit drinks, energy drinks, or soda. Why is this bill important? According to the Connecticut Department of Public Health, 32 percent of Connecticut children ages 2 to 17 years old are not at a healthy weight.

This bill specifically addresses the largest source of daily calories in the diets of American children -- sugary drinks. Sugary drinks provide nearly half of children's added sugars intake and do not typically provide any positive nutritional value. Despite their caloric count, they're not filling. Each extra serving of a sugary drink consumed a day increases a child's chance of becoming obese by 60 percent.

The American Heart Association recommends no more than six teaspoons of added sugar a day for children over the age of two. People living in the United States consume an average of ten teaspoons of added sugar just from sugary drinks alone every day. While the AHA recommends no more than one eight-ounce serving of sugary drink a week for children, nearly two-thirds of our country's kids consume at least one sugary drink every day. That's about ten times the recommended amount of sugar. On average, Americans consume 42.7 grams of sugar through beverages daily. This corresponds to approximately 34 pounds of added sugar annually.
In conclusion, this legislation is supported because it helps reduce one of the biggest culprits in the obesity epidemic and change the current norms that sugary drinks should be offered up first to our kids. We know that children who drink sugary drinks have greater odds at being at an unhealthy weight than those who consume little or no sugary drinks. This bill simply makes it easier for Connecticut parents to make a healthier choice for their kids. We believe it is deserving of your support. I'd be happy to answer any questions you have now or at any other time.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Thank you so very much. We appreciate you being here, and thank you for all the work that you do.

JIM WILLIAMS: You're welcome.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): We have a question from my Vice-Chair Representative Comey.

REP. COMEY (102ND): Hi. Thank you for coming here. I was wondering what your thoughts are on -- that chocolate milk is better than no milk.

JIM WILLIAMS: Chocolate milk -- so, when chocolate milk -- it does contain many good nutrients that your body needs, like calcium and protein, but typically it also includes added sugar. So, what we're really tryin' to do to address the obesity epidemic and the fact that, you know, so many of our kids are not at a healthy weight is to make the default choice on these menus a healthy beverage. And again, although chocolate milk does have some nutritional value to it, typically it also includes
added sugar, so that's why we would like it available to the parents still -- just like a soda -- but just not on the menu for the default choice.

REP. COMEY (102ND): Thank you.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Representative Boyd.
REP. BOYD (50TH): Thank you, and thank you for coming. Certainly, the American -- the American Heart Association carries a lot of weight and, you know, has done some good stuff (no pun intended there), but you know, taking a position on things certainly is not something that you take lightly. Kinda, you know, dovetailing on what my good colleague was sayin', it seems to me that, you know, as we're also talking about Red Bull and some other things and age that, you know, Red Bull and chocolate milk seem to be two different sides of the spectrum. And, you know, my question would be -- my first question is, where do we draw the line? You know, 'cause you know, chocolate milk is -- the sugars in it are negligible at best, and there's a lot of, you know, as you said, good nutritional things, but I certainly can understand the position that, you know, Jolt or Red Bull is maybe not appropriate. And I'm just tryin' to figure out where would the line be on that type of stuff, rather than tryin' to swoop everything into one basket.

JIM WILLIAMS: Yeah, sure. Regarding energy drinks, you know, what you put into your body actually matters. Sugary beverages, like soda, energy drinks are actually the number one source of added sugar, as I said previously in my testimony. Where the American Heart Association is with added sugar. And
I think that the language in this bill, you know, with the exception of possibly adding in 100 percent juice, draws a fair line for parents while still preserving their choice to choose whatever it is they wanna buy for their kids.

REP. BOYD (50TH): Yeah.

JIM WILLIAMS: But it hopefully will make it easier for parents to make a healthy choice for their kids.

REP. BOYD (50TH): Right. What would you say to the argument that parents really just need to parent and say, no, you're not gonna order this, and it's not the government's role to start saying what you can see and what you can't see on a menu.

JIM WILLIAMS: Well, I think the government has multiple roles. Certainly, they get involved in children's safety issues. They certainly get involved in health issues as well. You know, perhaps, you wouldn't have seatbelts if it wasn't for government, and that certainly has worked out well.

Regarding -- you know, back to the material that's in -- or the language that's in this bill -- you know, right now, it's -- the Department of Public Health is telling us that 32 percent of our kids are not at a healthy weight, and that's going to probably create adults who aren't at a healthy weight. And that will, you know, cost taxpayers, and it will create unhealthy people who, you know, will end up having long-term weight-related disease and heart-related disease.
REP. BOYD (50TH): Yep, it is definitely an issue, and I appreciate your testimony. Thank you.

JIM WILLIAMS: You're welcome.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Are there any other questions? Representative Kokoruda.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you for being here, and your testimony, and your organization does so much great work. Taking up where Representative Boyd spoke about drawing a line, that's one of our hardest problems up here. But with what you said, wouldn't it be fair to say that the line should be drawn. Maybe we should also include coffee shops like Starbucks, children under 16 not being allowed to purchase those drinks, not be able to go into a gas station and get one of those slurpees? So, couldn't we actually take this -- because if you're opposed to energy drinks, I assume you're also opposed -- I see the things my grandchildren carry out of Starbucks -- holy mackerel. So, shouldn't we take that line and draw it farther away and -- farther away and make it all coffee shops do not service children 16 and under with these drinks, gas stations like Cumberland Farms with these sugar drinks that the kids love (I don't know if they call 'em slurpees). So, maybe we've looked at this too limited, and we should really go much further. What would your -- do you think your organization would support that?

JIM WILLIAMS: Well, I would say that's not -- that's not necessarily the conclusion that we've drawn yet, and I'm not sure what the viability of that language would be in the legislative process.
I think we’re very comfortable with the language that's in this current bill -- you know, again, with the exception of potentially adding 100 percent fruit juice, and you know, I would suggest that that might be a valuable conversation for another day.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): So, this may be just the first step toward that. Because obviously we could look at the caffeine in a small Starbucks, or these drinks our kids get with all the whipped cream, there's caffeine and there's a lot of sugar. So, maybe from your organization's point-of-view, this would just be the first step, and we could pursue this to the point where 16 and under children would not be allowed to frequent all these other places that they do regularly, and maybe that's where we're -- we're heading with your organization.

JIM WILLIAMS: Well, we're not tryin' to do that, as you can see from the language in the bill. This is language that we support that's in a proposed bill format. And, you know, I'm a parent myself, and my kids don't even like soda. They don't go to Starbucks. I think, you know, perhaps that's a conversation for another day, but not one that we're willing to lead or start right now.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): Well, if you look at a Starbucks drink -- I don't mean to pick on Starbucks but -- my grandchildren have no soda in the house, but the teenagers go to Starbucks. If you look at those drinks and the amount of caffeine that I've just discovered is pretty high. I didn't realize that the coffee I make at home is not as high in caffeine as when I get a Starbucks -- news to me -- but if you look at those drinks and then you add these -- these -- the pump things they put in and
whipped cream, wouldn't you agree that the contents of those drinks could be as bad for you as these energy drinks?

JIM WILLIAMS: Oh, I would agree that they could be as bad as energy drinks, for sure, but what we're tryin' to do is to create a default choice on a children's menu at a restaurant. We're not -- we're not interested, you know, in Starbucks or gas station --

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): So, this bill -- excuse me -- this bill would not include a Cumberland Farms being able to sell an energy drink to a 16 year old? These are just restaurants? I thought we were including stores that 16 and unders would not be able to buy some of these products. Is that not true?

JIM WILLIAMS: That's not my understanding, no.
REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): Okay. I misunderstood that. I thought that was in the bill. Thank you for your testimony.

JIM WILLIAMS: You're welcome.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Thank you very much. Just a followup question from myself. If you wanted the 100 percent juice included in there -- I've heard that quite a few times, and we will absolutely consider that in JFS language. One of the other things that has been conveyed to me is that the language of the bill perhaps might not be entirely clear that this is not a ban on those sugary drinks -- that it is -- it's we're just simply, as you said, making healthy suggestions and that a parent
can still order as they see fit for their child. With that said, if the JFS language also came out with something that said "healthy choices include," and those are the ones that you put on the grouped meals, would your organization consider supporting that as well?

JIM WILLIAMS: I believe so, and I agree with you. I think the initial public perception on this bill -- you know, I recall driving home from the LOB when the bill was introduced, and that evening former Senator Mark Kleep [phonetic] was on the -- on the radio talkin' about how it's basically preventing parents from -- from makin' a parental choice. When you -- when you read the language in the bill, it actually doesn't do that. I think it's pretty clear that it doesn't do that, but we're more than willing to work on JFS language to clarify that with you.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Excellent. Thank you very much. Are there any other questions from the committee? Seeing none. Thank you very much. We appreciate your time. Next up is John Herb followed by Jessica Y. John Herb -- last call? Okay, Jessica Y. Oh, we have another baby-wearer. There's nothing that makes me happier than a mom who wears a baby. Welcome to the Children's Committee.

JESSICA YOUNGBLOOD: Thank you very much.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): If you could -- if you could state your name and where you live, we'd appreciate that. Thank you.

JESSICA YOUNGBLOOD: My name is Jessica Youngblood from Groton. I'm expressing my (sorry, he's gonna
grab these) -- expressing my opposition to HB 7005. This is a bill, as proposed, would remove the school nurse from the list of people acknowledging the religious exemption from mandatory school vaccines and to add the clergy instead. The role of the person acknowledging the --

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Both mics are on, so don't worry about it. We can hear you.

JESSICA YOUNGBLOOD: The role of the person acknowledging the exemption is to confirm the identity of the person signing the form. It is not for the person acknowledging it to agree or disagree with what they are signing or to verify the religious objections [baby talking/laughing] to vaccinations. While this is in regards to an exemption based off of religious beliefs, this is still a medical school form and contains information regarding a child's vaccination status. In this respect, the school nurse [baby talking] protects the privacy of the child and expresses -- exposes sensitive health information to the least amount of people since the religious exemption gets filed with them at the school. The school nurse was added in 2015 for this very reason. Representative Linehan, you have said that some school nurses don't feel comfortable signing a religious exemption, which is why there's a recommendation that the option to be removed. I feel that with proper education on what exactly an acknowledgement means, there shouldn't be any discomfort. Again, the nurse is not agreeing or disagreeing with the religious exemption, they're only confirming the identity of the person signing.
In addition to removing the school nurse, the proposed bill would add the option to have clergy acknowledge the religious exemption. I oppose this addition on the grounds that this is not only unconstitutional but also directly discriminates against religions that do not have clergy. Not only does this reveal private health information to someone who frankly does not need to know and has no legal repercussions from sharing this protected information, but it also encourages citizens to disclose their religion. This is not the separation of church and state.

Our country was build on the freedom of religion to the point that the very First Amendment to our Constitution allows individual citizens freedom from government interference in both private and public affairs. This was later incorporated [baby talking] at the state level in the due process clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. This also infringes on the Fourth Amendment, which protects the right [baby talking] to be secure in their person. This proposed bill disregards these constitutional rights.

In 2017, during the public hearing for a different proposed bill, you had stated that there was concerned about the potential -- [Ringing]

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Thank you very much for coming, and I will say that I think he was very convincing. [Laughing] No, it's really great that you were up here with him in the end. We thank you very much. Are there any questions from the committee? Thank you very much for coming. (Bye buddy.)
We have Megan Belval followed by Eric Roise. Is Megan available. Thank you very much. Welcome to the Children's Committee. Please state your name and where you're from.

MEGAN BELVAL: Hi, I'm Megan Belval. I'm from Avon, Connecticut. Thank you for hearing me today, committee members.

I oppose HB 7005 because it is illogical and unconstitutional and causes an undue burden to those choosing to use the religious exemption in order to attend school. The school nurse is clearly the most logical person to acknowledge the religious exemption because number one, the convenience factor, since the nurse is at the location to which the exemption applies; number two, because the nurse most likely can identify the parent whose signature they are acknowledging; number three, because the exemption relates to the choice to opt -- opt out of a vaccine, which clearly pertains to medical information.

Removing the nurse would violate the laws related to medical privacy and confidentiality by forcing parents to disclose their medical information to someone who is not bound by these same privacy laws. The addition of clergy to acknowledge statements under HB 7005 is equally illogical and unconstitutional. Religion is a personal and private matter that may or may not have a physical place of worship or a formal religious organization with clergy. The bill clearly discriminates against those with religious beliefs who do not have clergy as part of their religion.
Clergy have no right to access the private and personal medical information of our children and are not bound by the same confidentiality as the school nurse is with regard to medical information. The intent behind HB 7005 is conveyed with quotes from the co-chair of the Children's Committee, Representative Linehan, to the press as follows, "The nurses see that many of these children are partially -- partially vaccinated, and these nurses have a concern that the religious exemption is being utilized with no actual religious exemption. They essentially feel they are being asked to lie in some circumstances." These statements demonstrate that those supporting this bill do not understand the law as written with regard to the religious exemption.

The language of the religious exemption form is clear that the purpose of the signature by the nurse, or any other person, is listed solely to be a witness to acknowledge that the person signing the exemption form is who they say they are and that they are signing the form for the purposes of using their religious rights to opt out of vaccination in order to attend school. The person witnessing cannot make judgments about the specific religious reasons parents have for opting out of this pharmaceutical intervention. They are not being asked to lie if they can acknowledge that the person signing the form is who they say they are.

Some parents may have religious objections to a particular vaccine based on the specific ingredients, such as, for example, the presence of aborted fetal tissue in that vaccine and therefore choose to avoid just that one. Additionally, some
parents may legitimately have both religious and safety concerns about vaccination, and this does not disqualify them from using the religious exemption for their children to attend school and certainly does not mean they are lying to the nurse by submitting the religious exemption.

It appears that the legislative intent behind this bill is to weaken and eventually abolish our religious exemption to vaccines. Before we head down that path towards medical tyranny, I implore you to look at all the ingredients and serious side effects of these injected pharmaceutical products, just as you are with energy drinks, which was discussed earlier today. (I have one more sentence.) How can we demonstrate such concern about various ingredients in energy drinks, yet turn a blind eye to the even more toxic and disturbing ingredients in vaccines that are injected into our bloodstream.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Thank you very much for your testimony. We appreciate you coming here today. Are there any questions from the committee? Seeing none. Thank you very much.

Next up we have Eric Roise followed by Valerie Horsley.

ERIC ROISE: Good evening. Thank you for having me. My name is Eric Roise. I’m from Centerbrook, Connecticut. I work for Kaestle Boos Associates Architects in New Britain, Connecticut. I'm a landscape architect. I've been practicing in Connecticut in the Hartford area for the past 24, almost 30 years now. I do not support Raised Bill
AN ACT CONCERNING A MORATORIUM ON THE USE OF RECYCLED TIRE RUBBER ON PLAYGROUNDS.

As proposed, the ban does not consider how these materials are actually used, the ubiquitous scope of their use in our environment, or the current body of research on the products crumb rubber is used in. The proposed ban will greatly limit the choices available to municipalities in providing for safe and accessible playgrounds that can be maintained within an available municipal-level budget and expertise.

Recycled rubber has been in widespread use in a variety of projects since the early 1990s. Recycled crumb rubber can be found loose, in mulch form, coated, as part of resilient mats, mixed with asphalt for road construction, and in recycled timbers. It is especially important in recreation products, where its long life, durability, and resiliency is valued as a stand-alone product or within products running track surfacing, resilient flooring, synthetic turf, or playground surfacing. As a result of its widespread use, there is a large body of research on the health, environmental impact, and safety of crumb rubber, both in the U.S. and in Europe that has evolved in the 30 years since it became widespread. None of the research has identified health risks associated with air quality or ingestion that would support a ban on this material or the products that contain it, and if there was, the industry would be running away from this product.

The U.S. EPA is currently performing a comprehensive multi-agency study on recycled crumb rubber as a result of media articles suggesting a link between
crumb rubber and certain rare lymphomas in soccer goal keepers. These same media articles have frequently been repeated as evidence of health risk, even though subsequent studies have noted that the amount of lymphomas observed was statistically normal. Washington State Health Department has a study on that. My written testimony has a link to that study.

The existence of the federal study on crumb rubber does not indicate a health risk. Action on crumb rubber should be reserved for the time when the results from the federal study are released. The available science and research does not support the proposed moratorium. Bill 7003 should be rejected.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Thank you very much for your testimony. We appreciate you coming here today. Are there any questions from the committee? ["Yes" in background]

REP. COMEY (102ND): Hi, yes. So, I didn't catch where you're from -- you're from a landscape company?


REP. COMEY (102ND): Oh, okay. So, you typically work with municipalities and probing playgrounds.

ERIC ROISE: Schools, playgrounds, parks, athletic fields -- throughout Connecticut and New England.

REP. COMEY (102ND): Okay. Thanks.
REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Thank you. A quick question. So, as you represent municipalities, this is not a ban on -- on these fields or these playgrounds. It's a moratorium on new build. With that being said, we are looking to wait for the EPA report. If, in fact, the EPA report comes out and says that this is carcinogenic -- these are carcinogens, especially for children, and the recommendation is not to build them anymore, then wouldn't the moratorium on new build actually save municipalities money? Because, at that point, if we have to rip them out, we don't want them to buy something that proved to be a danger to children and then have to spend more money to rip it out. So, wouldn't the moratorium on the -- on the new build actually save a municipality money?

ERIC ROISE: Possibly. My opinion is that the EPA study will be inconclusive and will not say one way or another.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): I'm sorry -- and I mean this will all due respect -- are you a scientist?

ERIC ROISE: No.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Okay, thank you -- 'cause I just wanted to -- there's a lot of conflicting information.

ERIC ROISE: No, this is my professional opinion having reviewed many of the studies that have been done on crumb rubber and recycled crumb rubber.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): And what's your background?
ERIC ROISE: I'm an architect.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): An architect. Okay, great. Thank you. Are there any other questions from the committee? Thank you very much for coming here today. We appreciate your time. Valerie Horsley please.

VALERIE HORSLEY: Hello. Thank you so much for all the work that you do for children in Connecticut. My name is Valerie Horsley. I'm an associate professor of molecular cell and developmental biology. I'm here to testify in support of Bill 7005, which would remove nurses from signing off on religious exemptions for vaccines.

We know that school nurses are already overburdened in our school systems. In my own children's school -- I have two daughters, ages 12 and 7 -- we have one nurse for two buildings for grades one through eight. So, having them sign off on a religious exemption is illogical to me because they do not participate in the religious convictions of our parents. But I thought it would be useful for the committee to hear about some of the history about vaccines and to hear about the biology of how this works briefly in my three-minute time.

So, in the early 1700s, milkmaids were milking cows, and it was noted by a doctor that they were not getting the smallpox that was spreading throughout these towns. And so, when he started realizing that they were catching cowpox from the cows that they were milking, and this was making them not get the vaccine and smallpox that was ravaging towns in Europe in the 1700s, he then developed a vaccine
based on the smallpox vaccine that basically eradicated smallpox from the world. So, in 1972, we stopped giving vaccines to patients, and I was born after 1972, so I didn’t receive a smallpox vaccine when I was a child.

The way vaccines work is that there are antibodies on viruses and bacteria that our bodies recognize as foreign, and so every time we catch a cold, our body is fighting against that cold. And there are a hundred cold viruses, and so we don't catch the next time we see that cold because there's memory in our immune system because it's an amazing system that our bodies have to fight disease. And so, when we get a vaccine for a disease, we're getting the proteins that our body recognizes as foreign, but we don't actually get the disease that could cause child -- child-born illness.

And so, in the early '90s, there was a devastating medical hoax where a doctor that had interest in earning money off of anti-vaccine in the U.K. published a paper that said that there was a link between autism and vaccines. This paper was retracted because he manipulated the data in that paper, and he was later convicted of medical fraud. Since that paper, there have been other studies, and there is no evidence that there is any correlation between the MMRP vaccine and autism.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Thank you very much, Dr. Horsley. I'm sorry, I have to interrupt you. It's been three minutes, and we're talking about fairness. Thank you very much for your testimony. Are there any questions from the members of the committee? Can you stand by for one second?
VALERIE HORSLEY: Sure.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): We have no questions at this time. Thank you very much. We appreciate your time.

VALERIE HORSLEY: Okay. Yep.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Next up is Tony DeSimone followed by Matthew Paterna.

TONY DESIMONE: Good afternoon. My name is Tony DeSimone, and I am the executive director for the New England Tire and Service Association. Thank you for having me here today. Madam Chairmen Abrams and Linehan, Senator Kelly, Representative Green, and members of the Children's Committee, on behalf of the New England Tire and Service Association, I am here to express our concern about HB 7003, LEGISLATION TO STOP THE USE OF RUBBER IN SYNTHETIC TURFS.

The New England Tire and Service Association is a New England-based nonprofit association consisting of over 580 member locations, 90 of which are in the state of Connecticut. Our members are involved in all aspects of the tire and service industry, including repair, recycle, sales and service of new and retreaded tires. NETSA believes that HB 7003 would prematurely ban the use of rubber and synthetic turf surfaces that are currently benefiting the state.

Recent media claims that recycled rubber may be harmful to people and the environment have cast a
shadow on the benefits of recycling scrap tires. Field testing performed by the United States Environmental Protection Agency as well as tests conducted by the State Departments of New York, Connecticut, and California as well as laboratory evaluations at the University of California, Berkeley, have all reached the same conclusion. Crumb rubber used in artificial turf or as a playground surface poses no significant health or environmental risk.

Two new research efforts have been launched in response to the ongoing media reports raising concerns about this matter. In June 2015, a three-year $2.6 million dollar study was launched by the California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment that will seek to evaluate and identify possible chemical hazards presented by human exposure to crumb rubber. The study will also consider the possible ways people are exposed to tire crumb, including breathing, accidental ingestion, and skin contact.

Secondly, the EPA, the Centers for Disease Control, and the Consumer Product Safety Commission have announced a joint research project that was supposed to be completed by the end of 2018, but it's still ongoing. They will seek to identify and characterize the chemical compounds found in tire crumb and how people are exposed to those compounds.

In response to these claims, the Tire Industry Association (TIA) Environmental Advisory Council conducted an extensive review of the testing performed in the United States and overseas regarding the health and environmental effects of
using crumb rubber. TIA found that in every [ringing] evaluation, researchers reached the same conclusion -- crumb rubber used in artificial turf or as a playground surface poses no significant health or environmental risk. Thank you.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Thank you very much. And, I'm sorry, as I was doing committee business, I missed where you were from. Can you repeat that for me?

TONY DESIMONE: I'm from Kingston, New Hampshire. I am the executive director for the New England Tire and Service Association ["Okay" in background], and we have 580 members throughout New England, 90 of which are in the state of Connecticut.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Thank you very much, and are there any questions from the committee members? Hearing none. Thank you very much. We appreciate your time.

Next up we have Monica S. and then John C. [Background talking] We can move ahead with John Catain [phonetic] -- sorry, I thought that you were -- [laughing] my apologies. If you wanna come on up, and then when Monica comes in, we can make sure to have her immediately following you. Hello, sir.

JOHN CATTELAN: Hello, Representative. It's Cattelan actually. I'm not sure how --

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): I apologize.

JOHN CATTELAN: It's not your fault.
JOHN CATTELAN: [Laughing] Representative Linehan, Representative Green, members of the Children's Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify tonight. My name is John Cattelan. I'm here today on behalf of the Connecticut Alliance of YMCAs. The alliance represents 21 YMCAs across the state of Connecticut. I'm here today to urge the members of this committee to support House Bill 7006, AN ACT PROHIBITING THE INCLUSION OF CERTAIN BEVERAGES ON CHILDREN'S MENUS.

The bill requires a restaurant that sells a combination of food items and a beverage, sold together at a single price and primarily intended for consumption by children, to make the default beverage offered with the meal a healthy option. This bill does not ban the sale of soda. It's not intended to -- it does not ban the sale of soda -- I'm gonna say that again, which has been reported on local TV news and social media across the state. California, New York City, Baltimore, and Louisville are just a few places that have taken this important step. A sugary drink can still be provided with a children's meal at no additional cost, but the consumer must ask to replace the healthy beverage with a soda.

The Connecticut Alliance of YMCAs is keenly aware of the staggering rates of childhood obesity rates in Connecticut. Thirty-three percent of the children in Connecticut are obese or overweight. This is not a problem, it is a epidemic, and I would suggest that if 33 percent of the children in our state were impacted by some type of disease, the Connecticut
General Assembly would rise to the occasion to try to solve this problem. A 2007 study from *Public Health Nutrition* found that fewer than 10 percent of parents considered soda a healthy option for their child, and parents should keep in mind that one 12-ounce can of soda contains 39 grams of sugar, the equivalent of three full-size chocolate-frosted donuts from Dunkin' Donuts.

Childhood obesity impacts a child's long-term health and performance in the classroom. It can also have lifelong psychological effects on a child. The Connecticut Alliance of YMCAs understands the need to develop more comprehensive anti-obesity strategies that go beyond simply imposing a ban on a certain beverage or requiring exercise, but this is a start in the right direction. We believe it's very clear that if we want our children to become productive adults in our society, we must continue to address the childhood obesity epidemic.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Thank you, sir, very much, and thank you for your passion regarding this issue.

JOHN CATTELAN: Thank you.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): I really appreciate it greatly, and -- and I'm glad that you mentioned that this is not a ban. Parents can still choose what they would like. There has been some discussion among many of the people who have testified on this and even outside of the building not here today. The inclusion of 100 percent fruit juices, which was not originally written in the bill, would you support that?
JOHN CATTELAN: Yes, we don't have a problem with that.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): And secondly, because of the public misconception of what this bill actually is and does, one of the suggestions was to have language in there that would state on the menu "preferred healthy choices" and then list the beverages in the grouped meals. Would your organization be okay with that as well?

JOHN CATTELAN: Yeah, we would not have a problem with that either.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Excellent. And, Representative Boyd.

REP. BOYD (50TH): Hello, sir. How are you?

JOHN CATTELAN: Good. How are you?

REP. BOYD (50TH): Good. Dairy has taken an interest in this bill, and I understand a lot of the concerns that come from sugary drinks. And as one of the other gentleman before, we talked about, you know, certainly soda and chocolate milk are two different sides of the spectrum. And would you support, you know, milk being listed as a healthy option in this process?

JOHN CATTELAN: Yes, we would, and as someone who grew up in the northwest corner of Connecticut with many dairy farms, I'm obviously aware of the concerns of -- that farmers have with this issue and would not have a problem if milk were listed as one of the options.
REP. BOYD (50TH): Okay, very good. Thank you.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Oh yes, you were probably gonna ask the same question, but Representative --

REP. WILSON PHEANIOUS (53RD): Just to clarify that point, so are you saying that -- are you saying that chocolate milk would be acceptable as milk, in other words a flavored milk?

JOHN CATTELAN: I would say that it should be regular whole milk. Flavored milks are not healthy. You could ask any pediatrician. They would not recommend that a child drink any type of flavored milk, that they should stick to 100 percent white milk.

REP. WILSON PHEANIOUS (53RD): I understand that point, but given the concern of the dairy farmers, I'm also a bit worried about them because that cuts into a whole line of their product, which is not unhealthy -- it just may not be as healthy as unflavored milk.

JOHN CATTELAN: But, I mean, Representative, I'm open to discussing this issue with the members of this committee. I'm not going to commit one way or the other right now. I'm open to having that discussion, but I would say that -- you know, even I have young children, and one of them really likes chocolate milk, and his pediatric dentist told him besides the fact it's not good for your -- the health, it's really bad for your teeth as well. So -- but I'm willing to have that discussion.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Thank you very much. Ah, Representative Kokoruda.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): John, good to see you.

JOHN CATTELAN: Hi, Representative.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): I just wanted to remind you, a few years ago in this committee, we passed a bill on the drinks, and we didn't use chocolate milk -- we used something about sodium or salt. The Governor had to veto it because he almost had a mob outside the -- his office. So, I think when it comes to chocolate milk, I think your point is well taken with our farmers -- our dairy farmers. And also, the idea that children are drinking milk. And I think we have to be very careful -- I was amazed -- the fact that we were gonna ban chocolate milk became a major issue. Like it came up during my campaign later. So, I think we have to be very careful with what we do with that -- the chocolate milk thing.

JOHN CATTELAN: Well, and as I said, I'm definitely willing to discuss it. I -- you know, as I said, growing up in the northwest corner, I'm fully aware of the families that I'm still friendly with and the struggles they have as dairy farmers in this state. And obviously, I do not wanna do anything that harms their ability to make a good livin'.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Are there -- are you finished, Representative? Okay. Are there any
other questions? Thank you very much for being here today.

JOHN CATTELAN: Thank you.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Next we have Shannon Gamache with Michael Ulicki and Joseph Luppino on-deck.

Hello, and welcome to the Children's Committee. Hi, would you please state your name and the town in which you reside?

SHANNON GAMACHE: Sure, my name is Shannon Gamache, and I live in Ashford, Connecticut. I'm also on the Board of Education in Ashford.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Thank you.

SHANNON GAMACHE: I'm here in opposition to Bill 7005, which you're all very familiar with today -- lots of us speaking on it.

Dear legislators, my fellow citizens of the state of Connecticut and also United States of Connecticut, land of the free. I'm the mother of three children. I religiously oppose vaccinations. I'm under the impression that the signatures available on the religious exemption are somehow seen as not adequate and changes are to be sought. Those changes would suggest removal of a school nurse's signature. The school nurses only verify the identity of the parent when acknowledging the exemption, like it states in your bill.

School nurses are required to acknowledge many documents that come into the school, from hundreds,
sometimes thousands of students on many different thing, and I doubt that they have struggled, as another nurse has mentioned, with doing so. It is their job. If there is such pushback from the school nurses, surely education is lacking as to their role in the school system and their job requirements. None of their signatures on any document is an approval of parental choices.

A notary is also available to sign. Notaries sign many documents on a daily basis, none of which they need to agree or disagree with. Family support magistrate, deputy clerk, town clerk, justice of the peace, commissioner of the superior court, or a school nurse are also available. I can tell you right now that there is only one person on this list that I would have easy access to on a daily basis, and that is the school nurse. Removing them adds another layer of difficulty to turning in a religious exemption.

This change would also like to add members of the clergy to acknowledge such statements. Why? What other documents that are turned into the state, or anyone for that matter, would a pastor or a priest ever have to sign based on your private beliefs? Do I need clergy to sign off if I refuse chemotherapy for cancer based on my religious beliefs, or if I refuse a blood transfusion? No, I'm allowed to make that decision myself. I'm allowed to make that choice as a parent for my children. Frankly, asking that question alone is discriminatory and violates our civil rights.

Asking clergy to sign these state forms also puts a target on them for persecution. State-licensed
workers are expected to sign things as part of their job. Clergy is not. Requiring clergy to sign this state form increases state involvement in religious matters, and increases religious involvement in state matters.

As I said prior, I'm a mother of three, two of them in public school. I've been required to fill out and sign many papers every single year -- papers for enrollment, papers that verify other medical information, such as the state physical packet, permission for Tylenol to be given, permission for sex education classes, permission for field trips, who can pick them up after school or pull them out of school for an early dismissal, or a dental work to be completed in school refusal form. Some of these I have opted out of based on my privately held religious beliefs. No special paper, no special signature was needed. My identity--my identity did not need to be verified for any of these other religious objections.

Be assured that my personal religious beliefs enter every sphere of my thinking. My religious beliefs [ringing] are part of every decision I make for myself and my family. Religious beliefs are personal beliefs, and personal beliefs are religious beliefs. You cannot separate the two or ask someone to verify their beliefs. Freedom to practice religion is our First Amendment right, a freedom protected by the Constitution and protected by the state of Connecticut's Constitution.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Thank you very much for your testimony. I'm sorry to have to interrupt, but with such a long list, we're really trying to keep to the
three-minute limit. Thank you very much. Are there any questions from the committee?

SHANNON GAMACHE: I'm happy to answer any.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Seeing none. Thank you very much. We appreciate your time. Michael Ulicki followed by Joseph Luppino and Ariana Rawls Fine.

MICHAEL ULICKI: Hi, thank you for having me. I tried to bring a kid up, but it wasn't mine and he didn't wanna come. I did -- I knew you liked that, and I'm tryin' to sway you. He's got his headphones over there.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): We could all use a little levity from time-to-time, so thank you so very much, okay.

MICHAEL ULICKI: Yeah, I was gonna get Peter -- we were gonna rap my testimony, but he didn't have his scratch table. Anyway, I'm gonna keep my point short.

I'm one of the few dads that have come here today. And I'm very concerned about my daughters, their rights, and their privacy. I've had to give up my right to privacy to come here to protect it. The thing that I think is most important about this issue is that the state and the law requires acknowledgement on that, and because they wanna require that, they can't infringe upon our rights not to -- oh gosh, I'm losing my train of thought, and I said I'd keep this short. Listen, you guys want a signature -- sorry, I don't mean this as any -- you want a signature, and you require a signature
be acknowledged. Okay, we're giving you medical information -- it has to be through somebody who is HIPAA -- down with HIPAA, like the nurse, okay? You can't say, oh let's just do the doctor, 'cause what if the doctors come here next year and say, listen, we don't feel comfortable signing this.

You got -- the way I see it, you have two choices. You either -- you leave it as it is, and you kill the bill now -- today we're done with it, then go back and figure out what you wanna do. Either you keep the nurse, you want the signature, or you just scrap the signature altogether and go back to 2015. On that, I think it's really that simple, okay? You have to protect our rights and our HIPAA rights. You can't say -- (oh sorry about that -- oh, I did -- sorry). Anyway, I think I'm running out of time.

Also, I had a couple of points. I really and sincerely wanna thank school nurses. I don't know if that woman was here or not. My daughter was very sick -- (oh, I'm from Cheshire -- Mike Ulicki from Cheshire -- did I say that) was very sick, and what a godsend group they have been to her and my family. I don't have anything else to say about that.

And, oh, I have one last point. It is that if this bill goes to the full House or whatever for a vote, I pray to God that it's not changed in any form that impedes upon a religious exemption as it is today. It doesn't change it, doesn't remove it, or anything like that. I know that's been said a lot, but in my heart, I do not wanna have to go home and tell my daughters that they can't go to school. Thank you.
REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Thank you very much for your compelling testimony, and please, send my best to your daughter.

MICHAEL ULICKI: Oh, she's doin' great now. Great -- great story, but I only have minutes.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): [Laughing] Well, you know how to find me. So, you can call me anytime. Thank you very much, and are there any questions from the committee?

MICHAEL ULICKI: You're welcome.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Representative.

REP. WILSON PHEANIOUS (53RD): Thank you. Thank you, Madam. Yes, I do, and I think I asked the same question of another person earlier. Is there anything going on in the school that -- that is making your daughter afraid that she's gonna be separated from other kids, or is she getting -- is that coming from -- where is that coming from?

MICHAEL ULICKI: For my daughter personally, there's nothing about -- about that now. Now if -- you know, you may have heard from other people testifying and I'm sure people can tell, as Liz -- Representative Linehan said, the docking or doxing going on.

REP. WILSON PHEANIOUS (53RD): Okay.

MICHAEL ULICKI: I talked to one mother here who is getting threats -- I wish you were dead, your kids are dead. So, you know, here -- me coming today and
saying I don't vaccinate my child, my children -- I'm concerned. I'm concerned for me, and I'm concerned for them. I don't know. Kids are mean. Kids bully. My daughter's already bullied a little bit in school, and she's -- she's handled it. She's a tough kid. However, that's the thing I'm afraid of. It's not now. Now the cats out of the bag about my daughter, and -- and so that's why I wanna tell this information to a school nurse, who has to keep it confidential, not somebody at the town hall who doesn't -- who doesn't understand or whatever. Because, in a lot of ways, if you're a person who chooses not to vaccinate or an anti-vaxxer, you could be a target. There's a lot of hate in -- I was gonna use the vitriol-- a big word, but that's what's going on. So, I hope that answers your -- your question.

REP. WILSON PHEANIOUS (53RD): Yes, it does, sir. Thank you very much.

MICHAEL ULICKI: That's what I'm fighting for -- it's just --

REP. WILSON PHEANIOUS (53RD): And thank you for your appearance. People need somebody to fight for them, so I appreciate your passion.

MICHAEL ULICKI: Yes, yes. Any more?

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Thank you, Representative. Are there any more questions?

MICHAEL ULICKI: Oh, I wanted him to hear my testimony. Darn you.
REP. LINEHAN (103RD): You know what -- you know what --

MICHAEL ULICKI: I didn't know your name. I'm sorry, sir.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): It's Representative Turco. You know where to find me. You can always reach out to me, and I'm happy to continue this conversation moving forward with you.

MICHAEL ULICKI: I'm gonna come tonight at the town hall.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Are you? Okay, great. [Crosstalk] Well, I -- I think it would be really great and we can give you all the information, but thank you all very much. I thank you. I appreciate you, and I'll talk to you soon.

MICHAEL ULICKI: All right. Great. Thanks. Thanks everyone.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): We have Joseph Luppino followed by Ariana Rawls Fine and Christine Ulicki.

MICHAEL ULICKI: Oh, my wife's not here.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Maybe I'll see her tonight.

JOSEPH LUPPINO: Hi there.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Hello, how are you?

JOSEPH LUPPINO: I'm good thanks -- a little long, but good. My name is Joseph Luppino. In keeping
with the Chair's request, I am a former resident of Monroe, Connecticut. I currently live in Winchester, Virginia, and I'm the head of public affairs for Red Bull North America. I wanna thank you for this opportunity to speak today, but on behalf of Red Bull North America, we wish to register our strong opposition to House Bill 7007.

As an advocate of science and fact-based policymaking, Red Bull has a long history of collaborating with legislative and regulatory authorities all around the world to ensure lawful marketing and safe consumption of our products. To repeat, Red Bull does not support the proposed ban on the sale of energy drinks. Our written submission provides additional information on the background and safety of energy drinks as well as extensive information regarding marketing commitments we've made publicly and adhered to by ourselves and other energy drink manufacturers in the United States through our national trade association, the American Beverage Association.

However, I would like to take [background noise] just a few moments to highlight some facts. Energy drinks are safe. Energy drinks have been sold for over 30 years and are available in over 170 countries around the world. That being said, energy drinks account for less than two percent of all non-alcoholic beverages sold and consumed in the United States.

American teens get more caffeine on a daily basis from coffees and teas than energy drinks. According to the most recent information available from the National Coffee Association, and I quote, "The most
robust increase in daily coffee consumption occurred among those between the ages of 13 and 18, whose daily consumption rose to 37 percent in 2017" -- most recent year for data to be available. According to data compiled by the United States Federal Government, 12 to 18 year olds get three percent of their average daily caffeine intake from energy drinks. This same group gets half of their daily caffeine intake from coffees and teas, which actually now surpassed sodas and other carbonated beverages as the single largest source of caffeine for teens.

Teens are no different than adults when it comes to how their bodies metabolize caffeine. According to a risk assessment they found done by the European Food Safety Authority in 2015, and again, I quote, "The single doses of caffeine considered to be safe for adults may also be applied to children because the rate at which children and adolescents process caffeine is at least that of adults." In other words, there is no scientific basis for distinguishing between children and adolescents and adults when talking about caffeine consumption or metabolism.

To close, energy drinks have far less caffeine than most Americans believe and much less than the most popular coffees and even some teas. As Dr. Adamson said earlier, a mainstream energy drink contains 10 to 15 mg of caffeine per fluid ounce. Coffeehouse coffees contain anywhere from two to three times that amount. [Ringing] Even Connecticut's own Bigelow Tea produces an American breakfast tea that contains the caffeine equivalent of one-and-a-half Red Bulls. Thank you.
JOSEPH LUPPINO: I'm sorry. I hate to interrupt. I apologize, but the three-minute bell -- it happens. Thank you very much for your testimony today. Are there any questions from the committee? Yes, Representative Wilson Pheanious.

REP. WILSON PHEANIOUS (53RD): Yes, do you find that caffeine -- the substance caffeine from whatever source it may be derived -- has a positive impact on children or adults?

JOSEPH LUPPINO: I will qualify by saying I am not a scientist. I will then go on though to say, from the standpoint of positive, it depends on how you wanna describe -- describe positive. I'm aware of the fact that actually caffeine is used in children that had ADD for example. Children that are born with -- with apnea issues are actually prescribed and given caffeine. So, I would say that there are beneficial effects for children, and certainly from the standpoint of adults, there is a litany frankly of research done on the health benefits of caffeine.

REP. WILSON PHEANIOUS (53RD): Right, I do not doubt that there may be some positive uses for caffeine. My concern would be that from all the testimony I've heard and from all that I've known, caffeine is not a good substance for adults or children, regardless of whether it comes from Red Bull or whether it comes from -- from coffee. So my concern is that I wonder if a substance like Red Bull is gonna be more attractive to teenagers. It's a little cooler to drink a Red Bull, I think, than it is to go and order a cup of coffee from Starbucks. I could be wrong.
JOSEPH LUPPINO: I only wish that drinking a Red Bull [laughing] was as cool with teenagers as going to Starbucks and getting a Starbucks. Because, as I just said, the National Coffee Association has said nearly 40 percent of teenagers drink coffee every day, and I can tell you from our research, less than 10 percent of teenagers consume energy drinks on a regular basis -- a regular basis, much less daily.

REP. WILSON PHEANIOUS (53RD): I guess my concern is that unless there is a specific positive impact of additional caffeine in a -- for adults and children -- I'm not talking about a specific child that might -- might, you know, be able to benefit from some caffeine, but I'm just talking about your normal, average child -- I'm wondering if you can tell me why this is -- why it's appropriate and necessary to have a substance like Red Bull for kids?

JOSEPH LUPPINO: Well, I guess it's not necessarily whether it's appropriate or not to have a substance or a product like Red Bull for kids, it's more a question of whether or not you should be actually putting an age gate -- a mandatory age of minimum purchase -- on a product like that and not having extended that to other caffeine-containing products if your concern is around caffeine. Representatives mentioned it earlier. I mean, there are a variety of products out there that have as much if not more caffeine than energy drinks have, but this legislation isn't talking about that. And I know that I've had the opportunity to meet with a good number of folks on the committee over the course of the last week or so, and I said, if there's a
conversation that wants to be had about caffeine, we
would love to be a part of that conversation.

The one thing that I've learned in the seven-and-a-
half years that I've been at Red Bull is that the
average American consumer, whether they're a
teenager or an adult, are incredibly naïve about
caffeine. And we think that there's a lot to be
learned for everyone, frankly, about caffeine
collection, and what is -- what is safe levels,
moderate levels, healthy levels, and frankly what is
potentially unhealthy and unsafe.

The issue is about age-gating a product. I mean
there are very few products in this country, and
frankly in this state, that are age-gated, and
they're age-gated because I think we all know that
we acknowledge that they are inherently dangerous
products and that they need an age gate because of
that. And when someone reaches the age of majority,
if they make a conscious decision as an adult to use
those products, we as a society say that's your --
that's your prerogative. So to suggest that energy
drinks would fall into that same category is
scientifically not -- not justified, and that's
really where we're coming from as far as this
legislation is concerned. I'm not sitting here
saying that kids should or shouldn't drink Red Bull
or energy drinks or soda or anything else. What
we're saying is age-gating is an incredibly powerful
tool, and age-gating is used in a very, very limited
set of circumstances. And the question becomes if
it is scientifically valid in this particular
instance.
REP. WILSON PHEANIOUS (53RD): Okay, well thank you very much for that clarification, and although we haven't had the opportunity to meet, perhaps we will be able to do that to continue this conversation.

JOSEPH LUPPINO: That would be great. Thank you.

REP. WILSON PHEANIOUS (53RD): Thank you.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Representative Turco.

REP. TURCO (27TH): Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you very much for your testimony. I just have a couple of clarifying questions. So, you stated in about an, I think it's 8.4-ounce Red Bull, just kinda the standard size Red Bull is the same amount of caffeine as a --

JOSEPH LUPPINO: Regular coffee.

REP. TURCO (27TH): Home-brew coffee. How 'bout a Starbucks brewed coffee?

JOSEPH LUPPINO: Starbucks is two to three times as much caffeine, once-per-ounce.

REP. TURCO (27TH): Okay. So, how about other additives that are in Red Bull that may not be in a coffee or a Diet Coke or -- are there other products within Red Bull that could be dangerous to children?

JOSEPH LUPPINO: No.

REP. TURCO (27TH): Okay, 'cause we have this testimony from the City Hill Middle School that listed all of these other substances that are
obtained in energy drinks and the dangerous side effects to them. And I'm not sure where they got all this information, if this is all medically proven, but are these -- I don't know if you had a chance to see this or hear their testimony -- are these chemicals contained in Red Bull?

JOSEPH LUPPINO: I heard their testimony. I haven't had a chance to read it. I'm not sure precisely what's on that list, and I'm not going to speak [background coughing] for anyone else. Dr. Adamson made a point when he was testifying, which I though actually resonated very well with me. When I was in the sixth grade is when I took a first interest in government, and I have now spent the better part of the last 40 years continuing to pursue that interest. So, I think it's great that kids do those kinds of things and that we do what we can to encourage that. That doesn't necessarily mean that it's sound science by which they're making their -- their opinions be known, nor is it necessarily the best thing that you should be doing to make public policy.

The truth of the matter is, there is not a single ingredient in Red Bull -- I can't speak for any other products that are out there, I'm sure you can appreciate that, I don't work for those companies ["Sure" in background] -- there's not a single ingredient in Red Bull that is inherently dangerous. Caffeine may be something that you do or do not want inside of your own body, but it's not dangerous on its face -- the same thing with the other ingredients in our product.
REP. TURCO (27TH): Okay, yeah, that's what I'm tryin' to get to is if every -- every energy drink out there can't be created equal. I mean, the students talked about that there was a child that died from drinking two Monster energy drinks back-to-back and then died. So, can you shed any light on that compared to your product -- the amount of caffeine, the other substances that are in your product, versus -- maybe your product doesn't need to be regulated, maybe there are other energy products that do -- can you provide any information on that?

JOSEPH LUPPINO: And they are -- and they are. Every energy drink product that is sold in the United States is regulated by the Food and Drug Administration. We are all held to the same standards as all other foods and beverages. So, we are regulated. So, the assumption that we're not regulated is not accurate. We're not currently being regulated by the state of Connecticut, but we're regulated by the FDA, every product is. And I mean that's just -- I mean that's just a simple fact. Frankly, that's the same case in every jurisdiction that I'm familiar with around the world. Food authorities around the world regulate the content, if you will, of an energy drink.

REP. TURCO (27TH): Thank you very much for your answers. Thank you.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Thank you, Representative. Are there any other questions? Okay, well I have a few.

JOSEPH LUPPINO: Okay.
REP. LINEHAN (103RD): To clarify for the record, you -- first of all, Representative Turco did not know where this information came from, but I did look it up. It is from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration of the U.S. Government. With that, you know, I try to keep my house clean, and because of that, I know I'm never supposed to mix ammonia and bleach. So, those things when they are separate might not do me all that much harm just by mixing them and using them, but when we mix those things, a lot of harm can come to us. So, that's why what Representative Turco was saying and what the City Hill Middle School children gave us from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration is that many of the ingredients that are in these energy drinks, that when they combine it's a problem, right? So, you have caffeine. And when you are looking at energy drinks versus Starbucks, Starbucks is brewed coffee and it has a lot of caffeine, yes. But, doing a quick search, I found that it doesn't have the vitamin B6, vitamin B12, synthetic caffeine energy blend, sodium, potassium in excessive amounts, sugar, ginseng, L-carnitine, guarana -- all of these things -- and inositol -- all of these ingredients that are found in energy drinks all have the same side effects, which is increased heart rate or dizziness or some cardiovascular issues.

JOSEPH LUPPINO: Which are primarily associated with caffeine.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): But each one of these from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration lists the ingredient with its side
effect. So, if energy drinks were simply caffeine, that would be one thing, but energy drinks -- like vinegar and bleach -- you're adding things on top of each other to have a negative effect. So, my concern is that regulating caffeine consumption is not an entire picture here and that it's all of these ingredients together that makes energy drinks harmful, and that is my concern. And do you have any testimony to refute that?

JOSEPH LUPPINO: I would be happy to provide you with literally what is a ream of paper that was the course of four studies done over the course of 15 years by the European Food Safety Authority. The reason why EFSA is so far ahead of the United States when it comes to research on energy drinks is because energy drinks essentially started in Europe, and so the first initial round, if you will, of concerns about potential health effects emanated from there, and so they've done a lot more research on this, particularly when it comes to potential synergies of ingredients and things like that. They have unequivocally concluded there are no synergistic effects between the various ingredients that are contained in energy drinks.

The SAMHSA report itself, there were a number of criticisms of the SAMHSA report when it came out. But even beyond putting those criticisms aside for a second, you have to contextualize what SAMHSA said. SAMHSA said that there was an increase -- I believe, if I recall correctly -- something in the neighborhood from 13,000 emergency room related incidents involving energy drinks to 20,000 over the course of, I believe it was, a six-year period. During that same period of time, energy drink
consumption in the United States went up thousands-fold. It went from when they were first introduced to the market and basically nonexistent to a time when literally they were starting to be sold on a more regular basis. Again, still a fraction of all products being consumed, but certainly being sold on a more regular basis. They said there were 20,000 incidents in the highest year that they had data for. Almost 50 percent of those incidents had correlated either illicit drugs, legal drugs, or alcohol associated with them. The individual merely acknowledged that on top of taking illicit or legal drugs and/or alcohol, they also consumed an energy drink.

Secondarily to that 20,000, in that year, there were 123 million emergency room visits in the United States. When you start doing the math on that, your calculator can't even handle how far down below the decimal point it goes. I'm not trying to minimize the potential that somebody had an adverse event. What I'm trying to say is it needs to be from the proper context.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Okay, and just with that information that you gave -- thank you very much, but I know that there are some countries that have banned energy drinks -- Denmark and Norway, and -- and I'm sure there are others. I know that England tried to ban them, but they -- I believe that that didn't go through. I wanna say -- I don't wanna put countries on the record that I'm not 100 percent sure of, but we can find this information. Even though there's other countries that have banned that for children under the age of 16.
JOSEPH LUPPINO: I am aware of two countries that have imposed bans under the age of 18.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): -- and Lithuania.

JOSEPH LUPPINO: Latvia and Bulgaria. As far as I'm aware, and this is recent as I'll say, you know, the last few days, but I'm not aware of a ban in Denmark. I'm not aware of a ban in the U.K. -- or in Norway. I am aware that there was efforts underway, and frankly, to be perfectly candid, there's still conversations being had in the U.K. about potentially putting some kind of an age ban on. They appointed a select committee of the U.K. Parliament to ascertain whether or not they should move forward with that ban, and the select committee came back less than two weeks ago and said there's not a legitimate basis for doing it.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): And was that a ban for everyone or children?

JOSEPH LUPPINO: Under 16.


JOSEPH LUPPINO: Thank you.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Diana Bump followed by Lisa Levy, and then Brian F. is on double-deck. I'm sorry, did I miss one? ["Ariana" in background] I apologize. ["No worries" in background] Oh, I put a check next to you after I said your name but not
after you came up. I'm sorry about that. Please, go ahead. Welcome to the Committee on Children.

ARIANA RAWLS FINE: Thank you very much. Thank you for having me here. My name is Ariana Rawls Fine. I'm from Stratford. I have written testimony that has been submitted to all of you, so I'm not going to expand on that. I'm going to speak to something different. I will read a little bit.

Why are we here? Why are we spending so much time in public -- in a public hearing that is taking up everyone's entire afternoon and now the evening? Why are there so many that have submitted testimony opposing HB 7005 online and now in person here? Why is this important enough for me to travel up from Stratford with my six year old, who has been here all day? After all, this change to remove the school nurse and add on clergy as people that can acknowledge a religious exemption seems innocuous. I have expanded on my reasons for opposing in my written testimony, which you should have. Others before and after me went and will go into more detail about other aspects of why we oppose this bill, as written. That phrase, as written, is key here for me. I believe in transparency, and it is one that I would like to expand on -- upon -- in my oral testimony.

The sponsor of HB 7005 has now stated publicly in a Facebook group, and I quote, "I am more than happy to remove clergy from the final bill language and simply remove school nurses from the exemption form." After another person asked why anyone should be allowed -- should be able to be allowed to have a religious or philosophical exemption, she then goes
on to say, "I don't think they should; however, we don't have the votes to eliminate the religious exemption." Other speakers who are in favor of removing school nurses speak to them being overburdened. They are -- very much so -- but we are talking about a couple families that they -- if that -- that they would have them sign a form simply acknowledging that they are who they say they are -- about the same amount of time it would take to file that same child's medical paperwork. It would take less than five minutes. It is not overburdening a school nurse. They are simply acknowledging a person's existence -- their ID.

Again, I came here to speak about the bill, as written, and I did so in my testimony. But now I need to ask you my first question again. Why are we here with this bill, as written, when it is painfully obvious to many of us that the bill will be amended to something you are not reviewing today? Both the author of this bill and other legislators in the House have publicly stated on Facebook posts that they are looking to eliminate the religious exemption. This bill can't be amended. It needs to be killed now before it becomes something that you are not behind. This simple step is part of a coordinated goal that I truly hope you see across the U.S. It is one [ringing] that is playing out as we speak in New Jersey. There is no compelling reason to have this bill as written.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Thank you very much for your testimony. Are there any questions from the committee? Hearing none. Thank you very much. We appreciate your time. And now, Diana Bump, if you
will, and then we have Lisa Levy and Brian F. on-deck and double-deck. Thank you.

Hello. Welcome to the Committee on Children. If you can let us know your name and where you are from.

DIANA BUMP: Thank you, Madam Chair. My name is Diana Bump, and I'm from Ellington, Connecticut. (I don't know if this is on -- there we go.) Thank you, committee members, for giving me the opportunity today to come in and testify in opposition to House Bill 7005.

I know that there has been some redundancy today in the testimony presented, but I'm just gonna briefly go over some of the reasons why I think that this bill should not go forward. I think the mere request that a statement objecting to vaccination by a parent be acknowledged by anyone other than the parent is serving no valuable purpose. It's unnecessary, but yet it's already passed into state law. As many people said before me, since school nurses are already privy to the information contained on this form, parents feel most comfortable having them be the ones to produce the necessary signature. Therefore, it's very upsetting that school nurses be removed from the list of individuals that are allowed to acknowledge the signature, and again, as many other people have said, the purpose of acknowledging that it is the parent indeed who is filling out the form, not that they approve of or agree with the religious exemption.
As other people have also said before me, some of our Connecticut lawmakers have made it abundantly clear in written statements online that they intend to and hope to eliminate the religious exemption in our state. This is very concerning to those of us who utilize the religious exemption because we are truly opposed to the process of vaccination religiously.

As such, this bill is concerning because adding clergy to the bill makes it as though at some point it going to turn into clergy authorization of -- [inaudible-04:44:47]


LISA LEVY: Good afternoon, Representative Linehan, Senator Abrams, and members of the Committee on Children. I’m Lisa Levy. I'm an attorney at Greater Hartford Legal Aid, a nonprofit law firm. I represent low-wage workers in employment cases.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify House Bill Number 7001. Greater Hartford Legal Aid opposes this bill, which contains unreasonably broad language that jeopardizes the employment of low-wage workers by requiring DCF, the Department of Children and Families, in many circumstances to notify employers whose workers have a finding of abuse or neglect upheld against them. We offer the attached substitute language, attached to my testimony, that will fulfill this bill's objective of safeguarding children while not adversely affecting the continued employment of wide categories of workers.
DCF, as I'm sure you know, is charged with investigating allegations of abuse or neglect of children. After DCF issues a recommended finding -- and that's the language of the peers in the law -- that the person who has been found culpable for abuse or neglect poses "a risk to the health safety or well-being of children" and after the person has exhausted or waived an administrative hearing that results in DCF's decision to uphold that finding, DCF can then place the person's name and other information on its Abuse and Neglect Registry. Thereafter, DCF may disclose information concerning [background noise] the finding of abuse or neglect when perspective or current employers themselves request a check of the Child Abuse or Neglect Registry for employment, licensing, or other lawful purposes.

House Bill 7001 would nullify this protective language in the statute, which limits the disclosure as currently written to providing registry information from DCF as a response to lawful inquiries by employers. The bill imposes an affirmative duty on DCF to notify any employer with an employee whose job requires her or him "to have regular contact with children and to provide services to or on behalf of children, even when the employee does not provide direct care to or supervision of children."

The breadth of the language in 7001 will adversely impact low-wage workers. How so? For example, a single parent may be placed on the DCF registry because she attempted to physically restrain her teenage daughter from leaving the house in order to meet an abusive boyfriend [ringing] -- and my time...
is up already, so -- in conclusion, we are concerned for these individuals who may be on the registry. And I have represented many of them and in many cases thankfully gotten their registry entries reversed and gotten the substantiations reversed, but not everyone has access to legal aid and not everyone has access to an attorney. And for these individuals, if there is a finding and if this bill goes through, it will provide that a single parent or any parent who's an office secretary at a school or an administrative assistant or scribe at a healthcare clinic, who will understandably have regular contact with children, will be likely to be thrown out of a job because DCF would have to notify the employer.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Right -- and thank you very much for your testimony. There was some testimony earlier today that offered ideas for substitute language, not actual language itself, that would -- I guess the DCF system of the Abuse and Neglect Registry has the ability to assign a value to someone on the registry if they have a high danger or a likelihood of recidivism. And so what we're looking at now, and we're going to continue to work on as we move forward with this bill, is to somehow figure out how we can have this apply to those with a higher recidivism value, with a higher danger value, so that it makes more sense.

We certainly -- we are not in the business of putting people out of work. This committee is charged with ensuring that our children are safe, and that is mainly what we're looking at. So, with that information that I have given to you, when we
come up with language that works to do exactly what we had said, would you support that?

LISA LEVY: Well, I have actually attached proposed substitute language to my testimony. I'm sorry, I don't have your testimony. It was conveniently left out of my packet. That's okay, we'll get it after, but if you could just give a quick -- oh, here we go, thank you.

LISA LEVY: Okay. So, it's the final page. The substitute testimony does replicate in part language from the DCF statute, which as the representative indicates, puts a -- puts a higher value on situations where -- and bear in mind the commissioner can disclose information from the registry even if there hasn't been an administrative hearing yet, as long as it's been substantiated and the finding of posing a risk to health, safety, or welfare of children -- where the abuse or neglect is proven to or resulted in the death of a child, the risk of serious physical injury or serious emotional harm of a child, sexual abuse of a child, or the serious physical harm of a child. In that situation, coupled with still a limitation on the individual having a direct contact with children, we would -- we do not think we would be adverse to a language like that. And we'd be very pleased to work with the committee and work with the sponsor of the bill to reach such mutually tenable language.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): I appreciate that greatly, and I'm going to hold on to this until I get another copy. Thank you. And I would -- I would welcome that meeting for you to sit with us, and if you could speak to my clerk and give your business card,
we will make sure that that happens. Are there any other questions from the committee? Thank you very much for your time and for your advocacy.

LISA LEVY: Thank you so much, Representative.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Thank you. Okay, we have Brian F., and then LeeAnn Ducat and Bryan Hurlburt are on-deck. Thank you.

BRIAN FESTA: Good evening, members of the committee. I wanna thank you for giving me this opportunity to testify. I'm Brian Festa from Bristol. I am an attorney with practice experience in civil rights, particularly employment, housing, and public accommodations discrimination complaints. Should I wait until I have your attention, or -- okay, that's fine. And I'm not gonna spend a lot of time reiterating and regurgitating some of the other -- regurgitating is not a -- not a good word, I think -- but just reiterating some of the points that have already been made, but I do first wanna say that in my opinion, it definitely would be an infringement on the privacy rights of parents and their children to force them to seek an acknowledgment from someone other than a healthcare professional who is bound by HIPAA. You know, it also impliedly seeks to exclude and marginalize those individuals who don't belong to an organized religion by substituting clergy member, which has already been mentioned. Not everybody here, and certainly not everybody in the state belongs to an organized religion.

Connecticut law, such as General Statutes 46a-64, the Public Accommodations Statute, prohibits
discrimination on the basis of one's creed. That's intentional by the legislature, as you know, to use the word creed, not religion. And creed, as defined by Webster's Dictionary, is just a "brief authoritative formula of religious belief, or a set of fundamental beliefs or a guiding principle."

It's also been suggested that this bill might be amended to eliminate the religious exemption entirely. That's not a wild suggestion by any means, and indeed the American Academy of Pediatrics has already submitted testimony suggesting that amendment. I would urge you to reject any such amendment, as I believe it would be in violation of several Connecticut statutes and federal statutes. Principally, the Discrimination in Public Schools Statute, Section 10-15c, which mandates that "all children five years of age and over be given an equal opportunity to participate in the activities, programs, and courses of study offered in such public schools without discrimination" on account of, among other things, religion.

The Connecticut Constitution also guarantees the right to a public education, a free public education, Article 8 of the Connecticut Constitution, as well as the Equal Protection Clauses of both the Connecticut and the U.S. Constitution. So, you cannot exclude a class of persons from school, a right guaranteed to all other children, on the basis of their religion. Finally, the Connecticut Supreme Court has recognized that Connecticut law, "imposes an affirmative constitutional obligation on the legislature to provide [ringing] essentially equal educational opportunity for all public school children." Thank you.
REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Thank you very much for your testimony. We appreciate you coming here today. Are there any questions from the committee? Seeing none. Thank you very much.

BRIAN FESTA: Thank you.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): LeeAnn Ducat.

LEEANN DUCAT: Good afternoon everyone, Madam Chairperson, members of the committee. My name is LeeAnn Ducat. I'm from Woodstock, Connecticut, and this is my son, Wyatt, and he's here to join me today for this testimony. I appreciate the opportunity to speak. I know it's been a long day, so I'll try to keep it brief.

I'm here in opposition to HB 7005 as a private citizen and Informed Choice U.S.A., a newly formed consumer advocacy education -- and education group. I'm also a legal assistant and a state of Connecticut notary public. As written, this bill serves absolutely no interest for the state. There are no problems with the current exemption form or the process with which it is submitted. If a child is gonna get a religious exemption, why does it matter where the acknowledgement comes from?

They are clearly -- if school nurses don't wanna get involved, they're clearly misunderstood as to the role of a signatory. If that is truly the case, which we don't think it is, a very simple and inexpensive solution would be to educate nurses to understand their role as a signatory on this form. They're only confirming the identity of the signer.
They are not confirming anyone's creed and, in fact, should not be asking anyone's question -- anyone questions about it. The decision is between my doctor and I, who supports me. They are not agreeing or disagreeing with my decision. They are simply confirming my identity. So, the simple solution is, let's get them a memo as soon as possible clarifying this, free of legislative intervention.

Further, adding a clergy member to the list of signatories on the acknowledgement page is unnecessary and adds an element of confusion and panic to parents all over the state. We are receiving a flood of feedback, including the attached letter from the Universal Life Ministries, which I have provided for you in my submitted testimony. It's clear by this testimony that the clergy also misunderstands their role as a signatory.

But the bigger problem here is legislative creep. The attached testimony from the American Academy of Pediatrics is clear that they are in support of removing all non-medical exemptions, and that indicates to us that there is a bigger agenda at play here. Of note, "We believe you should not stop at school nurses but should eliminate non-medical exemptions entirely."

History has shown that this very committee has introduced seemingly innocuous legislation in the past, and garnered widespread support in the community, and proposed last minute amendments on the floor that contradicted the very thing that was promised to supporters -- (La Leche League). This
has completely shaken the community's trust in this committee. For that reason, we respectfully request and assert that this bill be thrown out immediately to prevent this from happening.

Moving forward with this bill, as written, has no state interest can only mean that there is an impending amendment waiting. If that is this committee's intention, we would like to make it very clear that any attempt to remove religious exemptions entirely in the state of Connecticut would not reconcile constitutionally for the following reasons and will be met with great opposition.

Connecticut General Statutes 10-15c state that discrimination in public schools is illegal. There is absolutely zero difference between children who are medically exempt and children who are religiously exempt. This is an egregious attempt at religious discrimination and, again, will be met with great opposition. [Ringing] Please reference the First Amendment, specifically the first freedom of the First Amendment. And as mentioned in her legislative profile, the Madam Chair believes in separation of church and state, so we are excited to request your help in killing this bill immediately and preventing any type of integration.

I have one last thing to say and I'll wrap. Forced vaccination is equivalent to medical rape. It's forced penetration by needle and nothing else. This committee has no business legislating that on our bodies. Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to many future dealings with this committee and to further protect the best interests
of the children of Connecticut. Thank you for your time.


REP. BOYD (50TH): Thank you, Madam Chair. One, I wanna give you credit because a lot of times, particularly on issues that there's such a broad, you know, opinion around that we get a lot of automated emails where people just put in their name, and it says the same thing. ["Copy and paste" in background] We get 50,000 of them from different people that start with, "I'm your constituent." And you guys have taken the time over the last couple days to actually meet with -- with legislators and have that conversation. I know when we met, there was some -- you know, I'd never seen the form before, and it was the first time. And so, you know, certainly I found it enlightening and informative. You know, the question I do have -- and it was something we talked about before, but I think it's important to have on the record -- is, you know, I always try to figure out where, you know, legislation is coming from, kinda what the impetus is, and a lot of that came out today, which was -- which was good. And one of the first questions that came to my mind is, if somebody's asking that a clergy sign, you know, does it come down to just outright distrust of the parent to do that? And so, my question to you would be is because of the religious exemption and there are parents who would object for other grounds other than medical or religion, what would be the way that
you would prefer to see this handled through and through?

LEEANN DUCAT: Well, given that current state legislation does not allow philosophical exemptions, our freedom of speech is actually violated, and it prevents us from objecting to these vaccinations based on anything other than a religion. We are not allowed to come here with objections based on flawed science, concerns over ingredients. We're not allowed to talk about whistleblowers. I mean there's a whole book. I literally have a Vaccine Whistleblower book, written by the man sitting right over there today. There is some telling information in this book, in the book, How to End the Autism Epidemic by J.B. Handley, and in the I Can Decide document that was submitted to this -- this committee this morning by Jen Shafer Wood. That document is extremely telling. It clearly delineates a very broad reach of medical tyranny that's happening in this country based on flawed science, based on conflicts of interest, and based on things that -- you know, science is just not fair, frankly. So, there's so many people reaching out about this. The only way that we are allowed to object to these vaccinations based on the current state law is through religious exemption.

REP. BOYD (50TH): It's the mechanism that's there.

LEEANN DUCAT: So, and I understand that there's a concern that people may be claiming false religion to get out of these forced -- forced medical procedures. The simple solution to that would simple to be give us the philosophical exemption back. That way, we can actually exercise our
freedom of speech, and you won't put any -- anyone in a position in the United States of America to have to falsely claim or religion. And I'm not admitting or denying I've done that, I'm just answering the questions asked.

REP. BOYD (50TH): No, no -- and I thank you for that. And, you know, because we are in hour six of a -- what's been a six-hour day -- I do wanna give the young man, since he came all the way from Woodstock -- which, you know, is -- a chance to say -- anything you'd like to say again?

WYATT: Ah, no.

REP. BOYD (50TH): That's alright. Well, thanks for coming up to the bat.

LEEANN DUCAT: I'd like to add, ["Please" in background] I spent 11 hours here on his birthday on Tuesday. I came here and I spent 11 hours, and I talked with every single legislator who would listen to me.

REP. BOYD (50TH): And -- and a great deal that wouldn't you talked to as well.

LEEANN DUCAT: A great deal that wouldn't I talked to as well, and I thank you for your time.

REP. BOYD (50TH): Yeah, yeah. No, and again, the passion -- one thing that has stuck, and even who don't, you know, have strong opinions on the issue, the passion has become very clear over the course of the day and the last couple of days, so.
LEEANN DUCAT: Yeah, it's not a black-and-white issue. There's so many moving parts. Thank you for your time.

REP. BOYD (50TH): Yep, so thank you for comin' up. Thank you, Madam Chair.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Are there any other questions from the committee? Representative Kokoruda.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): Thank you so much. It actually is for Wyatt. Wyatt, how proud are you of your mother?

WYATT: Very. [Laughing/background talking]

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): Thumbs up, right?

WYATT: Yeah.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): I saw that. Thank you.

LEEANN DUCAT: Thank you very much.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Thank you, Representative. And on behalf of the Committee on Children, I would like to give Wyatt a little gift. The fact that you were here today and you were here earlier on your birthday earlier this week, and your mom is so passionate and she came here and did a really great job, I think you did a great job too, so I'd like to offer you this pin -- this Capitol pin. You'll take that.

LEEANN DUCAT: Tell her you'll trade her. Say thank you. [Applause] Thank you, Madam Chairperson.
REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Thank you very much.

LEEANN DUCAT: Any further questions?

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): There are none. Thank you. We appreciate your time.

LEEANN DUCAT: Thank you. Have a great day.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Happy Birthday, Wyatt. I'd like to call Cheryl Martone, please. If you don't mind, I have to skip around for just one second. We'll have Cheryl Martone do her three minutes, then I'm going to hand the reins over to my vice-chair.

CHERYL MARTONE: I wanna speak to her. She had a lot of great points.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Welcome to the Committee on Children.

CHERYL MARTONE: Okay, I'm not a newbie here. I am a seasoned lobbyist. I've been testifying here, and gathering information, and giving everybody information since 2008. My name is Cheryl Martone, and I think you have my card there, and I'm from New Haven, Connecticut. I'm also writing a book called -- I'm working on it, and it'll probably be out this year or next year -- called CPS Crisis, and I'm here to support the Bill 797. And I like to say it's evening time, and this is all brand new -- mostly brand new committee members, is that correct, Representative Lineman? How do you say your name?
REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Linehan. Thank you very much for asking.

CHERYL MARTONE: Linehan. Okay.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): There are quite a few of us returning, and then also quite a few new ones, so.

CHERYL MARTONE: Okay, so I have a lot to say. I'm a lobbyist, activist, advocate, court watcher, and legal writer, and I run U.S. Concerned Parents Group and Movement and it's a nonprofit -- and my email, if anybody wants to get in touch with me, CTParents@Gmail.com. And I'm here to ask the committee today to also consider in the bill -- to put in the bill language -- that children need to be treated like a human being and not an inanimate object, like the DCF (and I've done a lot of research, talked to a lot of people), they have a kids for cash scheme going on -- and they should be treated like a human being not an inanimate object for the money, which DCF extorts from the Title IV federal funding to put in their [inaudible-05:06:07]. The agency workers write false reports to get children put in their clutches. And I'm saying this because you're concerned about the safety of the children, but they falsely rip children from their families and it causes emotional harm. My child and I are a victim by false complaints sent in to the agency.

I'm working with dozens of parents whose children are being abused by DCF, where the children are put in harm's way in a group home, foster home, with a sexually -- or with a sexually-abusing parent. If there is evident history of a parent or agency doing harm, then I child should not be left there in the
harmful environment. They are being robbed of their innocence and cause emotional and mental health problems.

One of my colleagues that I work with has a national foundation called, We The People Family Preservation, and I'm on their board -- out of Ohio. In order -- she -- her and I worked on this -- in order for the Federal Children's Safety Act to work, more steps to transparency with accountability must be present, not just for the agencies but judiciary issues for families and children face. To do this, guidelines for anyone acting in the best interest must be strict and sternly upheld. A citizen panel oversight opposite the political oversight would be more productive if applied for upholding our state's children's safety with this act [ringing] being discussed today. I just have one more short -- when agencies and judiciary have no accountability or transparency attached, it allows for much to happen, including corruption patterns that would injure not just children but families who love them too.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Thank you very, very much. We appreciate your time and your testimony.

CHERYL MARTONE: I just wanted to make one about -- I'm writing a proposal. I'm proposing a letter to Congress about the human ability -- Human Rights Accountability Act about the AFCC, and I'll send it in my written testimony.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): That's fantastic. Thank you so very much for your advocacy. Is there any question from the committee? Hearing none. Thank you very much for your time.
CHERYL MARTONE: I just wanna ask you, is there an email that people could send in written testimony to.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Yes, it's kidtestimony@CGA.CT.gov and all that can be found on our website.

CHERYL MARTONE: Okay, thank you, Representative Lineman [mispronounced]. Appreciate it.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Absolutely.

REP. COMEY (102ND): Okay, thank you. I'm going to be taking over for the rest of the -- the sheet here that we have to finish up. So, we have now speaking from -- we have LeeAnn Ducat -- or she's already come, right? Maybe Karol -- Karol -- [Background talking]. Thank you. Welcome to the committee.

KAROL STACHOWSKI [phonetic]: Thank you.

REP. COMEY (102ND): Just say who you are and where you're from. Thank you.

KAROL STACHOWSKI: I'm Karol Stachowski, and I'm from Berlin. I'd like to thank the committee. This is my second one today. It seems like the lines are shorter at Disney than at this facility at times.

First and foremost, I would really like to let everybody know how grateful I am because of the process that I'm afforded. I'm a refugee from Poland. I came over as a political refugee, and I fled persecution. I remember sitting on my father's
I shouldered during a solidarity march in Poland in the '80s and waiting for -- for food with my mom in line that was rationed to us. And we came to this country because of a very important document, and that's the Constitution and our freedom to express ourselves, freedom of thought, prosperity, chasing the American dream. And I feel that Bill 7005 basically takes everybody who has expressed this freedom of thought and presumes them guilty and wants additional evidence that they think the way they do from a clergy member. So, as the Madam Chair who just previously left said that this committee's job is to make sure kids are safe, so what's the reason behind removing the school nurse, which probably has to do one to two of these signatures on average since there's almost as many schools in Connecticut as there are exemptions, and putting a member of the clergy? So, that's the first question.

The second question is, who determines who this member of the clergy is? If someone's a Scientologist, is Tom Cruise's signature enough? [Laughing] Just asking -- you know what I mean? These are serious questions. If someone's family member sets up the church of beer and they determine themselves an ordained clergy member of the church of beer, is that person then gonna have a signature that's more important than a school nurse's? I mean, these are just some thoughts.

By the way, I haven't seen a group of passionate women like this in a really long time, and man, you know, they're extremely passionate about this cause, and I'll tell you why -- because there's nobody sitting at this table on this committee that can
guarantee that when a bill hits the floor it can't get changed in a crazy way. Crazy things have happened in this building when bills hit the floor, and there's nobody here that can guarantee it. So, these moms have come here, and they're freaking out because they know that this bill could be radically amended, killed, taken out, modified, morphed in any number of ways. So, with that, I would like for all of you to consider saying no to any amendments to this bill as well as all the other stuff that people way smarter than me before me had said.

[Ringing/laughing] Thank you. I appreciate your time.

REP. COMEY (102ND): Thank you, Karol. That was a very interesting outlook of -- of the topic. So, thank you for your -- your points. Do we have any questions from the committee?

KAROL STACHOWSKI: I'm here all night. [Laughing]

REP. COMEY (102ND): Thank you. Okay, so next we're going to have Zachary McCown -- McCuen [phonetic] and then next will be Cindy Prizio. Is there a Zachary from CCM perhaps? Okay, so next, Cindy Prizio. [Background talking] Okay, we're ticking through the -- the folks here. Next one, we'll have Jennifer Saines, and then after that will be Pazit Edelman. Jennifer Saines? [Laughing] Everybody in the room -- okay, my job is getting easy here. Pazit Edelman. Pazit? [Correction of pronunciation in background] Pazit, I'm sorry. Apologies. Thank you. Welcome to the Children's Committee. We're happy to have you.
PAZIT EDELMAN: Thank you. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to talk here.

REP. COMEY (102ND): Thank you. Would you mind turning on the other mic too and sort of pulling it towards you? It's -- that's great. Thank you.

PAZIT EDELMAN: All right. I thought I would stick to the script, but so many people said things here. So, I wanted to clarify something that I -- I think -- I have a hunch that all these bills that are popping up lately like mushrooms after the rain.

REP. COMEY (102ND): I'm sorry. Can you just introduce yourself and where you're from before you testify. Thank you.

PAZIT EDELMAN: Oh, yes. Sorry. My name's Pazit Edelman, and I'm from Windham. Sorry, I'm a little bit runny nose and stuff. So, I got the impression that a lot of the bills that popped up recently regarding the religious exemption are because of either misinformation or fear regarding the unvaccinated children. And I was wondering if any -- anybody here saw this document? These numbers are from the CDC website. A child's vaccine -- I'm sorry, I have to take my glasses off -- vaccines were gradually introduced between 1945 and 1995. Have you ever wondered just how many people died or suffered permanent harm from each disease before vaccine was implemented? So, let me tell you. That's what the CDC says, okay. So, polio -- polio -- 1 in 100,000. That means the population not harmed 99.999 percent. Okay. Now, let's go over to measles. Again, population not harmed 99.99998 percent. I can read it all. It's all in the 999 --
so, basically, all these diseases were eradicated before [inaudible-05:15:47] vaccination due to good hygiene, good water, good nutrition, and -- and it seems like a lot of people are really listening to the mantra that it's the vaccines that saved our lives. And, you know, it's -- it's not quite right.

I did not plan to speak all about that, but I had to say that because nobody points out that these are the statistics before vaccines. Now, if you look at today, today Connecticut has the highest vaccination rate. We have 98.2 percent of the kids are vaccinated in the state. The other ones have religious or medical exemption. So, the amount of -- of 1.8 percent of the children not vaccinated is the amount of the medical and religious exemption together. Now, is this cause any threat? These kids do not carry a disease. [Ringing] When I signed -- when I signed a religious form, I signed that I am -- I'm aware of it that if there is any disease or infection around, I will keep my child at home till -- till any danger is gone. So, every parent that signs a religious consent, a religious form, is aware of that -- that he needs to keep his child away if there is any problem, if there is infection running around in the school.

REP. COMEY (102ND): Okay. Thank you for sharing your thoughts, Ms. Edelman, and does anybody have any questions? Great. Representative.

REP. WILSON PHEANIOUS (53RD): I do have a question. I'd love to see the document that you have, and I'm particularly -- I'm old enough to remember the polio epidemic and what happened after the -- when the Salk vaccine came in and how things went down
because everybody was terrified of polio before that and it was sickness, and so I used --

PAZIT EDELMAN: That's right, and polio was -- was basically -- it went down and down because of clean water because polio is transmitted -- [background talking]. Where? Oh okay. I said that -- that when you have hygiene, and you don't throw the bath water to the street, and you have good sanitary and good plumbing, you have less diseases in general. And that's how things -- all these diseases subsided and, you know, got under control. And we haven't had any -- any major harm from any of these disease in the past ten years, according to the CDC. It's all in my testimony here, and I enclosed this chart and I enclosed how many vaccinated children according to the CDC are religious exempt and medical exempt and what percentage it is, and they're not -- I mean, if there was an epidemic now, maybe there was a point to deal with with the new legislation, but the legislation is okay. I mean, we don't need to invent the wheel. I hope you will reject it. I oppose it.

REP. WILSON PHEANIOUS (53RD): Okay. Thank you very much.

PAZIT EDELMAN: Thank you so much for letting me talk.

REP. WILSON PHEANIOUS (53RD): Thank you very much.

REP. COMEY (102ND): Thank you.
REP. WILSON PHEANIOUS (53RD): And is that -- is her information a part of our packets? I didn't find it.

PAZIT EDELMAN: Yes, it's part of my testimony.

REP. WILSON PHEANIOUS (53RD): Oh, all right, then we have it. Thank you very much.

REP. COMEY (102ND): Thank you.

PAZIT EDELMAN: You're welcome. Thank you.

REP. COMEY (102ND): Okay. Next is Sinthy Khamsaeng and then after that would be Carlos Rosado. Sinthy? Okay, we'll skip that one. Carlos Rosado, and after that we have Marcella Kurowski. Carlos? Marcella? We have Sara Bronin perhaps in the room? Are other folks waiting here to testify, or are you watching the outcomes -- 'cause we're at the bottom of the list? All right, I have Sara Bronin next. Larry Deutsch -- Deutsch. That's you? Okay, you're next. [Background talking/laughing] You're next up. Welcome. Thank you for coming.

DR. LARRY DEUTSCH: And thank you for coming.

REP. COMEY (102ND): Can you just introduce yourself and let us know what town you're from?

DR. LARRY DEUTSCH: Yes, yes -- my name is -- and I'll be very quick, much more than I should. My name is Dr. Larry Deutsch, and I am a pediatrician, also with a degree in public health. And what we're discussing, I think, today -- and again, I'll be way too quick -- I'd like to divide into two -- into two
parts, one medical science and the other in terms of the role of school nurses.

In terms of medical science, it's not possible to give enough examples about -- about how many lives have been saved and how much even more so morbidity has been avoided. I'll give some examples very quickly. For young children, there's HIB, Haemophilus influenzae, which has protected uncounted children against meningitis. We have not seen it in years. And when I was a resident, there was this -- a hundred years ago, when I was a resident, there was a changeover with the HIB shot, so that we did not see this damaging disease. Going to the older group of teenagers, I think everyone knows by now that there's been a rash of meningococcal meningitis on campuses, such that we now have immunizations to protect college students in dormitories. And you cannot know how ravaging a case of meningitis can be to a person of any age. So, that's an infection around the brain. It can have permanent damage, whether or not it results in death.

And everyone knows also about the measles epidemic in the Northwest, that's Washington and Oregon. And it's been said that much of that is because of lack of immunizations for various reasons, and we've had one case in Hartford at least. And I, again, at my age, I had measles, and then as a resident, I saw one case of measles -- have not seen any since, which is a godsend, you could say, because measles is a very serious disease and so is, by the way, rubella. The more rubella we have of children or other people on buses, elevators, and so on, the
more pregnant women will suffer the consequences of rubella to their fetus.

So, these are things that are factual, and I can observe them and there's statistics to show it. Now, what we're here for, it seems to me, is in public health we're interested in prevention. We're interested in doing things that protect people, and not only individually but others near them. And one example, for instance, we have a blood alcohol limit. There are no religious exemptions. If you have -- if you drive with a blood alcohol above a certain amount, you can be arrested and punished because you endanger not only yourself, but you endanger others. This is known. These are observations that we all have and the reasons for having committees like this and public health laws, which examine the evidence -- [ringing].

And then the second part, if I can just mention it, the role of school nurses. I have also worked in school-based health clinics and many elementary and high schools. They're admirable. We love the school nurses, and we agree with them when they say it's an imposition on them to have to make a judgment of that kind because some people here have said, well, it's a quick thing -- it takes less than five minutes -- it's an inconvenience factor -- it's easy access. We don't do that. If I have someone in my practice who -- who is against immunizations, I say well what are the reasons, and I say would you like to think about it and come back in a couple of weeks and I'll give you literature and you can read all you want. We don't dispense it -- I wouldn't dare dispense it in five minutes and say okay, fine -- for whatever reason.
REP. COMEY (102ND): Okay.

DR. LARRY DEUTSCH: So -- so, people are belittling the role of the education, and the school nurse can never do that because he or she has so much pressure to take care of so many other things. It's unfair to them.

REP. COMEY (102ND): Thank you, Doctor. Thank you for your insight, and I really appreciate you coming out. I -- my understanding is that, you know, prevention is the most -- the thing that you're concerned about, and I appreciate your insight into that and also your insight into the school nurse's role that they play in that in education.

DR. LARRY DEUTSCH: Thank you.

REP. COMEY (102ND): Is there any questions that we have for the doctor? Yes, Representative Turco.

REP. TURCO (27TH): Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you so much for coming and testifying today. It's good to hear from a doctor, a pediatrician. We heard from a nurse earlier today, but I don't believe we heard from a doctor on the subject, although I've been out -- been in and out of other public hearings. But what I wanted to ask you was, do you believe that the school nurses -- and maybe this is -- I'm asking you to maybe speculate here, you may not have enough information on this -- but do you believe the school nurses do not want to be part of acknowledging this form because it goes against their training as a medical professional. Where, it sounds like from your training, you have
learned the importance of vaccinations to prevent many diseases [background noise], so is that why nurses wouldn't wanna take part in this -- because it's against their training through nursing school?

Dr. LARRY DEUTSCH: No, I don't mean to -- nurses, especially school-based clinic nurses, are highly trained, highly intelligent, but they are, as others have testified, very burdened. And the job of discussing immunizations is on what we call the PCP, the primary care practitioner, which are not the school nurses, who have plenty to do. It should be a nurse practitioner in his or her office, a community health center, a doctor or others who educate because that has been said -- we need to -- if people still don't wanna get it, that's up to them, but we must explain to them the risk to their young person, especially their young person, which could range from lifelong disability to death -- and we've seen it recently.

And so, that's evidence we can all see with our eyes and see on the evening news, where -- I'm going on -- we're receiving reports of what's happening in the Northwest for various reasons. And we think -- the Academy of Pediatrics thinks, which I side with -- it's the role of all of us to protect children -- that's been said a few times -- including all of us in a public health arena, where the same way we cut down on cigarette smoking in this building and we're tryin' to raise it to 21. We cut down on alcohol consumption before driving. We wanna -- we wanna have protection of the whole community as well as the individual against these dreadful diseases. And it is true -- I mean polio -- the previous speaker was incorrect in saying that polio was going down
anyway -- you just have clean water and so on. It's just wrong. And the vaccine, whether it be saving [inaudible-05:27:28] or any others, has diminished it so that we've just about eradicated it.

REP. TURCO (27TH): Thank you, Larry.

REP. COMEY (102ND): Thank you. I have another question. So, do you think that in the case of -- do you think that doctors can play a role in being a signer on -- on the form?

Dr. LARRY DEUTSCH: Yes, of course, because the doctor has expertise. And again, the nurses, the scientists -- you heard from one from Yale -- their expertise is in medical contraindications, which are certainly real -- allergies of some kind or reactions -- the unreal things, they don't need to deal with in terms of the religious, and I haven't addressed that. I'm talkin' about the facts and the science, and that people should question the role of immunizations in modern day is unique throughout the world. The World Health Organization and everyone else insists upon it, and to have such an insistence for schoolchildren is quite reasonable. Otherwise, more of them will get sick. There's no question about that -- whether it be schoolchildren, high school students, college students, or any of us in an elevator. For instance, tuberculosis. We don't have so much in the U.S. because we have firm regulations about finding it and then treated it with followup, you see? So, we would be beset by much more disease, not less, if we did not have a public health approach, and I thank profoundly this committee for taking up this difficult question. But our job, all of us, no matter what we do, is to
protect ourselves but also others -- others that we love, other associates.

REP. COMEY (102ND): Thank you so much, Doctor. Any other questions? Yes, go ahead, Representative.

REP. WILSON PHEANIOUS (53RD): Yes, sir. I'm wondering, we've heard today that there are a very small percentage of Connecticut children that have this religious exemption. I think someone said it was about 1,025 or approximately one per school if you average it out over all the numbers of schools. And since the belief of people who don't want to get the vaccination for religious or other reasons seems to be extremely strong held, can you give me some idea of how dangerous or not dangerous it is to have children who aren't vaccinated amongst the others? Does it -- when you get down to numbers that are so small, does it really make a difference if those few children --?

Dr. LARRY DEUTSCH: We think it does in terms of the risk. Now take Ebola. If Ebola is not wiped out in Africa, everyone knows it'll spread because it's the commonality spreading person-to-person, and the more prevalent it is (that's the medical term -- prevalent), the more at risk it is. Now in Connecticut, we're fortunate that we have that high immunization rate. We're fortunate, but we have had a case of measles, haven't we, just recently? It may have been an immigrant or someone unvaccinated. And again, we think about measles and rubella. We have very few infants born suffering from rubella by the mother during pregnancy. It's only because the medical providers are very careful. And, I mean, again, I say it with some emotion, I have to admit.
REP. WILSON PHEANIOUS (53RD): Um-hm, certainly.

Dr. LARRY DEUTSCH: But, you know, things that I saw when I was a beginning resident, we just don't see anymore. And the suffering that results when these diseases appear -- kids are in the ICU. They're expensive for the public health system, and yet, you know, as they say, an ounce of prevention and all these kind of things, we think is vital -- even if it's a little controversial for some. So, I agree with your thrust. If it's let's say only a half percent, it's unlikely because if the others don't have it, then it's less likely you see. But, you take other examples around the world, and things will get worse if we let the immunization rate fall too much.

REP. WILSON PHEANIOUS (53RD): Thank you. I appreciate your response. Thank you.

REP. COMEY (102ND): Thank you. Anyone else? No, I'm sorry we can't -- [background yelling].

Dr. LARRY DEUTSCH: No, okay. Thank you very much.

REP. COMEY (102ND): Okay. Thank you very much. [Background yelling -- "You're committing a crime and being unethical right now."] Okay, that's enough. Thank you. [Background talking]

Okay, so the next person that we'd like up is Jason Y. And, just if you could -- welcome to the committee, and if you could just state who you -- your full name and where you're from. ["Madam Chairman" in background]
JASON YOUNGBLOOD: Hi, my name is Jason Youngblood. I'm from Groton, Connecticut. As a parent, I'm standing -- I'm standing strongly against this proposal because it goes against my personal religious beliefs to vaccinate myself and my family. I do not have a clergy, and my religion will never require one. The fact that this bill intends to replace the school nurse for a clergy member leaves me in a difficult position. The school nurse already has access to my son's personal medical records. Inviting a clergy member access to these records is not something I feel comfortable allowing.

There are many interpretations of what defines a religion, but not one that could be said to be the most accurate. With well over 4,000 recognized religions, to require a clergy member to sign for a religious exemption is discriminating against many of these religions. This bill is most certainly not a separation of church and state and should not be allowed to move forward. If there is time, I'd also like to add to follow up on the gentleman before me.

Some of you may know of a Sharyl Attkisson. [Background noise] She's an intrepid and forthright journalist formerly with CBS TV news and has been persistent in her media exposures regarding vaccine-caused health problems, especially the autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Every since she did an in-depth report for CBS, which the media bosses refused to broadcast, that led to Sharyl's independent journalism programs, which was a blessing in disguise. Recently, Sharyl exposed that CDC's expert vaccine witness, who previously debunked
vaccine-autism claims during vaccines injury masters hearings, Dr. Andrew Zimmerman, a pediatric neurologist, told CDC long ago that vaccines could cause autism, but they refused to accept Zimmerman's information. Instead, Department of Justice lawyers immediately fired him. If you all were interested, this was recently published January 6, 2019, and it's available over the internet if you wanna look up the actual video footage and watch it yourself. It's put together very well done. Like I said, she used to work for CBS. They refused to broadcast her proof, and it's very solid.

REP. COMEY (102ND): Thank you. Is that your -- are you finished?

JASON YOUNGBLOOD: Yes, ma'am.

REP. COMEY (102ND): Okay, great. Thank you very much for your testimony. Do we have any questions for Mr. Youngblood.

REP. WILSON PHEANIOUS (53RD): Yes, I wonder if you can give me that citation again as to where to see that video?

JASON YOUNGBLOOD: Yes, ma'am. I can bring it up. May I approach you?

REP. WILSON PHEANIOUS (53RD): Oh, okay, sure. You can -- if you have it written down somewhere, or --?

JASON YOUNGBLOOD: I've got -- I've got it right here in my phone if you wanna --

REP. WILSON PHEANIOUS (53RD): Okay, I'll see you.
JASON YOUNGBLOOD: Okay. No problem at all, yeah.

REP. WILSON PHEANIOUS (53RD): Okay, all right. I'll catch up with you.

JASON YOUNGBLOOD: Okay.

REP. COMEY (102ND): So that's a video that you're speaking of?

JASON YOUNGBLOOD: Yes. It's actually -- it's very well put together. Actually, I can give you all the link if you want it.

REP. WILSON PHEANIOUS (53RD): Yeah, that's what I --

REP. COMEY (102ND): Or just a way to search it -- that would be fine, yeah.

JASON YOUNGBLOOD: I'll do whatever -- whatever you'd like.

REP. WILSON PHEANIOUS (53RD): What I'll do is I'll give you my email address and you can send me the link.

JASON YOUNGBLOOD: That'll work.

REP. WILSON PHEANIOUS (53RD): All right. Thank you.

REP. COMEY (102ND): Okay, did you submit testimony -- written testimony as well?
JASON YOUNGBLOOD: I did, ma'am, yep.

REP. COMEY (102ND): Okay. Representative Kokoruda.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): Thank you. A good idea would be maybe you could talk to the clerk, and we could all get that video sent to us through the clerk of the committee.

REP. WILSON PHEANIOUS (53RD): Oh, okay. We can do that? Yeah, 'cause I'm not -- I'm challenged in that way, so that would be better.

JASON YOUNGBLOOD: I will give the video to whoever wants it. [Baby crying in background]

REP. WILSON PHEANIOUS (53RD): Okay.

REP. COMEY (102ND): Thank you, sir. Thank you for coming out. I appreciate it.

Okay, so that wraps up our list -- our written list. [Crosstalk] Is there anybody else who'd like to testify that has not testified already? (Has she testified?) Okay, great. Have a seat. Can you just introduce yourself and your -- where you're from?

KATIE Z.: My name is Katie Z. I live in Redding. This is why I didn't wanna testify out loud because I hate public speaking. So, I did submit my written testimony online. One thing that nobody's really addressed is that often times those that are called unvaccinated may only be missing one vaccine.
I started off vaccinating my children according to the CDC schedule because I trusted it. I trusted the doctors. I trusted the CDC. I did not know about the conflict of interest. I researched baby strollers. I researched car seats. I researched making organic baby food myself. I did not research the ingredients in vaccines. I did not even stop to think that one size does not fit all. Since the Congress -- Congress passed the law in 1986, the number of vaccines given to our children has more than tripled. It's what -- 72 now? [Crosstalk] Seventy-two doses of vaccines -- you have it between birth and 18. That schedule has never been tested. Those vaccines have never been tested against a placebo. My family has paid the price. I have a child and -- doctors -- the pediatrician who just spoke -- I want you to know, doctors are not educated on recognizing vaccine injury. It took eight years to get a diagnosis on my son. Now my son has a broken immune system. He is homeschooled for that reason, as a result -- because he is immunocompromised. And nobody is talking about this either. Oh, the immunocompromised -- my child is one of those immunocompromised. He cannot be around anybody who has recently gotten a live-virus vaccine. What do I do for my son who's looking at colleges? Do I say you're missing one or two vaccines?

I have since taken a religious exemption because now that I know better, I do better. My God did not give me these children to knowingly harm them. I have tremendous guilt that I unknowingly harmed them. And if you take away this religious exemption that affects 1.8 percent of students -- if you really believe in these vaccines -- if you believe
in them, that's your religion and scientism, then what are you worried about? They should be working. We are at 90 -- over 98 percent. They should be working if you're that concerned.

School nurses, it is not a big deal to say, yes, I am who I say I am. I don't want my neighbor, the notary, to know my business because people do freak out over this, and they do discriminate against our children. That was another reason I did not want to speak because -- people in my town -- well, we can find out. Really? My family has suffered, and it wasn't just my kids -- that's the worst part. I've heard the Lyme vaccine discussed as well. [Ringing] My mother was disabled from the Lyme vaccine, and she died from the pneumonia vaccine.

REP. COMEY (102ND): Okay --

KATIE Z.: Now we can screen for immunodeficiencies, but they don't -- they don't. We find out the hard way.

REP. COMEY (102ND): Thank you.

KATIE Z.: So, please do not eliminate this exemption.

REP. COMEY (102ND): Thank you, ma'am. Thank you for sharing your passionate -- your testimony -- and I really applaud you for coming -- for coming up.

KATIE Z.: I really don't like public speaking, so thank you -- thank you for listening.
REP. COMEY (102ND): You did a fine job -- [laughing] a really great job.

KATIE Z.: And thank you for opening your minds. There's more than one side, and it is not black-and-white. And we are not out to harm anybody's children. We don't want our children harmed.

REP. COMEY (102ND): Thank you. Thank you for coming. And thank you for spending the day with us. Thank you. Any questions?

REP. WILSON PHEANIOUS (53RD): No, just thank you.

UNKNOWN: I already testified, but can I do one minute on why you're hearing about --

REP. COMEY (102ND): No, I'm sorry. That's -- [background talking] you are welcome to send in additional written testimony to kidstestimony@CGA.CT.gov. [Crosstalk] Yeah, yeah, absolutely. Any --? Thank you so much. [Background talking] Have you spoken? Would you like to come up and speak, or you've already spoken? Okay, feel free to send us any written testimony in addition to this. And are we all set for the day? The next time that we're going to have a public hearing at this Children's Committee will be on the 14th at 1:00 p.m. in room 2A. And if there's any other business? We will adjourn the meeting. Public meeting is adjourned. Thank you.