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TESTIMONY OF THE MAINE MEDICAL ASSOCIATION
AND THE
MAINE CHAPTER OF THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS
IN OPPOSITION TO
L.D. 941, AN ACT TO PROHIBIT MANDATORY IMMUNIZATIONS

Joint Standing Committee on Health & Human Services
Room 209, Cross State Office Building
Tuesday, April 5, 2011, 1:00 p.m.

Good afternoon Senator McCormick, Representative Strang Burgess, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health & Human Services. I am Andrew MacLean, Deputy EVP of the Maine Medical Association (MMA), and I am speaking in opposition to L.D. 941, *An Act To Prohibit Mandatory Immunizations* on behalf of the MMA and the Maine Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP).

The MMA is a professional association representing more than 3400 physicians, residents, and medical students in Maine whose mission is to support Maine physicians, advance the quality of medicine in Maine, and promote the health of all Maine citizens. The Maine Chapter of the AAP represents more than 200 Maine physicians who specialize in treating children and adolescents.

As I set out in my testimony on L.D. 694 heard just prior to this bill, immunization is perhaps the single greatest public health achievement of the past century and those immunizations recommended by physicians today derive from the evidence-

based recommendations and guidelines of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices, the American Academy of Family Physicians, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the American College of Obstetricians & Gynecologists. A very strong majority of individuals in our country choose to follow their physicians' advice to have themselves and their family members immunized against vaccine-preventable diseases. This majority view is the basis for our current immunization laws in the education, health and human services, and workers' compensation statutes that L.D. 941 seeks to eliminate.

The title of L.D. 941 is misleading in suggesting that immunizations are "mandatory" under current law. They "mandatory" only if an individual or his or her child wishes to participate in our systems of public or private education, to seek the benefits of our workers' compensation system, or to take advantage of certain other public services. The policy rationale underlying these laws is that an individual choice against immunization should not put the rest of the population at risk of acquiring a vaccine-preventable disease. Moreover, current law, particularly in the education statutes and rules, provides exceptions for medical, philosophical, or religious reasons. *See 20-A M.R.S.A. §6355 and DOE/DHHS joint rule, Immunization Requirements for School Children.* It is appropriate for the law to provide exceptions for medical, philosophical, or religious reasons, but those exceptions should be narrowly drafted and applied in order to protect the majority of the population from the plagues most of us alive today know only as a subject in a history book.

The MMA and the Maine Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics urge you to reject L.D. 941. I would be happy to respond to any questions you may have.