

Oral testimony 5/13/2019

Forum regarding CT's Religious Exemption

Good morning members of the public health committee,

My name is Marie and I am a resident of South Windsor. Like you, I am concerned with the health and wellbeing of the children in our community. I am here today on behalf of my family, as well as many families in my community.

As you may know, CT, along with 47 other states, offers religious exemption to vaccinations for school aged children. This is an important exemption to families in our community.

I am concerned with the discussion that is occurring today, as well as some misleading statements that I have heard circulating recently.

First, I am concerned that certain legislators continually state that parents are using religious exemptions for non religious reasons. Also, certain legislators have repeatedly said that there are no religions or very few religions that object to vaccination.

I cannot speak for all parents, but this is simply NOT TRUE amongst parents in my community.

As Catholics, and on behalf of other Catholic families in our community, you must understand that we cannot in good conscience, use vaccines that are produced with aborted human fetal DNA matter, such as the Hepatitis A vaccine, Pentacel vaccine (DtaP, polio, and HiB combination vaccine), as well as the varicella vaccine. As you can imagine, a Catholic aware of this vaccine production cannot condone the use of intentionally aborted fetal matter, or allow such a product to be administered to his or her child.

Jewish families in our community who observe kosher guidelines do not eat pork or pork products. Why are members of our community being falsely accused of using the religious exemption improperly? Surely you can see that Jews who are aware of pork gelatin used in certain vaccines, such as the MMR vaccine, must exempt a pork product being administered to his or her child? This same concern is relevant to the many Muslim families that live in our community.

Second, please consider that there is NO public health crisis in CT. Why are certain legislators pushing for removal of the religious exemption when there is simply no public health crisis that would justify such action? There is NO public health crisis in CT.

This year, there have been just three cases of the measles in CT. Three. All three of these cases were adults. There were no cases of measles in children. There were zero deaths.

With a population of 3.5 million people and just three cases of measles in adults this year, clearly there is no public health crisis here. Please be objective when looking at the facts. Do not be swayed by a legislator's agenda or the constant media focus in the nightly news. There is simply no public health crisis in CT.

Should a vote or bill be associated with today's forum, please hear the wishes of the constituents that are here today. Uphold the religious exemption in its original form and preserve religious freedoms in CT.