

Dear Members of the Children's Committee --

I am writing in opposition to the removal of the Religious Exemption (RE) here in CT. In justification of removing the RE, Representatives Linehan, Elliot, and/or Ritter have sited protecting the immunocompromised children, which is misguided and unproven. Unvaccinated children are no more a risk to immunocompromised children (or anyone else) than vaccinated children (1), and in fact, children recently vaccinated with a live virus vaccine (such as the MMR or varicella) can shed that live virus and infect an immunocompromised child (or anyone else) (2), which is why hospitals such as St Jude (3) instruct that people who have received live virus vaccines should not enter the hospital because the live virus vaccines can pose a threat to their patients. There is no legislation attempting to bar children who have received a live virus vaccine from school in order to protect those immunocompromised students – why is there an attempt to remove the RE and bar children who are unvaccinated – and perfectly healthy and not carrying any infection – from schools? Further, the DTaP vaccine may cause some people to become either asymptomatic carries of the pertussis infection, or to have a mild case of whooping cough (pertussis), that will not be recognized and will go untreated, and will, in either case, be spread to others (4). In my own personal experience, my oldest daughter, who was vaccinated, got whooping cough from her vaccinated friend and her vaccinated friend's vaccinated mother, and she spread it to my infant who was not yet vaccinated – but no one is calling for barring vaccinated children and adults who could be asymptomatic carries or mildly symptomatic and infectious from school to protect the immunocompromised and infants. (5).

There is no compelling state interest to remove the RE. The data that was released by the DPH was inaccurate in many cases, for both ME and RE – and schools and families are up in arms over the rates being falsely reported (ie Redding being reported at 40% when in fact it was 4%; Haddam had a similar issue, and many other schools have reported that their rates were false and that they will not be supplying any new numbers because they do not trust this process). CT has one of the highest rates of immunization in the country, according to the CDC, well above their “herd immunity” standards. There is no “measles epidemic” (another reason given for the removal of the RE is that unvaccinated children will cause there to be an epidemic) in CT. The immunization rate for measles in CT has remained quite steady over the past 5 years (see below), and there have been 3 cases reported in CT this year – all in adults (2 from the same family), none in children. Last year, one of the few measles cases we had in CT was a teacher in one of the public elementary schools – but no one is calling for barring teachers from schools, or making vaccination mandatory for adults to enter schools. Again, just healthy children who are not vaccinated due to their family's strongly held religious beliefs. There hasn't been an epidemic; there isn't an epidemic now.

CT School Survey MMR % Vaccinated

Year	Kindergarten	7th Grade
	MMR Vaccinated %	MMR Vaccinated %
2017-2018	96.5%	98.4%
2016-2017	96.7%	98.6%
2015-2016	97.0%	98.7%
2014-2015	97.0%	98.8%
2013-2014	96.9%	98.6%

Representatives Elliot & Linehan have repeatedly stated that they think the RE is being used fraudulently by families, and have sited this also as a reason for its removal. Representative Elliot has

said he doesn't know of any religions that prohibit the use of vaccines – but one person does not get to determine what the religious beliefs of another should be, nor does one person's religious views trump the religious views of another. There are many reasons people may be religiously opposed to vaccines – the use of fetal cell lines in production of vaccines (6), the fact that there is an overwhelming amount of science stating that vaccines are not safe for everyone and may irreparably harm or kill individuals (perhaps he doesn't know of any religions that hold the tenet thou shall not kill, or harm none?), (7 – pub med is full of articles; this book showcases 400 of them. I am happy to send a copy of this book to anyone who wants to read through it at my own expense, this is THAT important) are just a start.

Those pushing for the removal of the RE state families can either get a medical exemption or homeschool -- this is not a satisfactory answer. For one thing, medical exemptions are nearly impossible to get. Even if your child has had a recognized life threatening reaction to a vaccine, most doctors will not write a medical exemption because (a) the CDC parameters were largely narrowed for what they say qualifies (and their qualification contradict the vaccine manufacturer's vaccine information sheets for the same vaccines), and (b) they fear losing their licenses, as is happening in CA to doctors who are writing legitimate medical exemptions for their patients. Our own pediatrician, after vaccinating a friend's child and seeing that child have a near fatal reaction and wind up in the hospital, told the mother not to worry, they would just vaccinate the child in the hospital the next time so they can revive him -- would any of you knowingly do something to your children, that are a gift from god, that you love and protect, that you know could kill them? As far as the option to homeschool, this is not an option for everyone; some children need special services provide by the school system, some families simply cannot afford to have one parent stay home, some families simply do not want to homeschool (and we all pay taxes to support these public schools). Further, if everyone did take this option, public school enrollment will suffer and schools will be losing badly needed funding by losing students.

Vaccine reactions are not rare, as the media would like you to believe. The HHS database for VAERS (Vaccine Adverse Events Reporting System) logs thousands upon thousands of adverse effects to vaccines, from mild (swelling or fever) to severe (anaphylaxis, lifelong autoimmune disorders, death), and the "vaccine court" has awarded over \$110 million in payouts in the first quarter of 2019 (not to mention the \$4.1 billion paid out up to November 2018) to individuals and families of individuals who have experienced a vaccine injury or death due to vaccine (8). Where there is risk, there must be a choice -- I sincerely hope you will read the below links/references, because our children's lives are in your hands. Protect our religious exemption and vote no to its removal.

Bonnie Roman

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References

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