



## THE CONNECTICUT FREEDOM ALLIANCE, LLC

### PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE

Testimony on H.B. 5044

February 19, 2020

“The foundation of authority is laid firstly in the free consent of the people.” Though first uttered by the Reverend Thomas Hooker in 1638, these words are just as relevant today as they were then. This bill represents nothing more than a total usurpation of the free consent of the people—as to what is injected into their bodies, what is injected into their children’s bodies, how they will practice their faiths, and how they will educate their children. In the absence the free consent of the people, the state cannot—without violating the constitutions and laws of our nation and state—insert itself into any of these decisions.

And many of us do not consent. We do not consent because we cannot consent. We cannot consent without violating our sincerely held religious beliefs. We cannot consent without turning our backs on our God. For too long too many legislators have oft-repeated the tired refrain that no organized religion has any formal teaching prohibiting vaccinations, and that therefore we are somehow “faking” our religious beliefs. Not only is this patently false, but it is irrelevant. Connecticut and federal law do not mandate that one’s personal religious beliefs align with the official teachings of a major organized religion. Religion is deeply personal, rooted in one’s own conscience and not in an official proclamation by a religious institution. As the U.S. Supreme Court has recognized, “[i]f an individual deeply and sincerely holds beliefs that are purely ethical or moral in source and content but that nevertheless impose upon him a duty of conscience to refrain from participating in . . . [a particular activity] at any time, those beliefs certainly occupy in the life of that individual a place parallel to that filled by . . . God in traditionally religious persons.” *Welsh v. United States*, 398 U.S. 333, 340 (internal quotation marks and citation omitted).

Although we realize that the U.S. Supreme Court has, in certain limited circumstances, held that the state can exercise its police power to infringe upon a fundamental right in the face of a compelling government interest, such as a genuine public health crisis, no such crisis exists here. No such crisis is even remotely on the horizon. Our own health commissioner admitted as much when in August of 2019 she stated that she did not intend to release the school-level immunization data for the 2019-20 school year: “Given that we have not had any further measles cases since April and because the immunization rate for the measles, mumps, and rubella vaccines in Connecticut remains above 95 percent statewide, we will not be releasing immunization rates by school for the 2018-2019 school year at this time.” See *Public Health Commissioner Declines To Release Updated School-Level Vaccine Data* (CT News Junkie, August 27, 2019). It was only after she was overruled by the Governor that the commissioner released the data. We urge you to not repeat her mistake. Do not strip thousands of Connecticut children of their fundamental rights to education and the free exercise of religion at the behest of political bullies.

The CT Freedom Alliance **opposes** H.B. 5044. Please vote no on this bill. Thank you.

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*Fighting to Preserve and EXPAND Our Freedoms!*