

EASTON, REDDING, AND REGION 9 SCHOOL DISTRICTS
654 MOREHOUSE ROAD, P.O. BOX 500 EASTON, CONNECTICUT 06612
OFFICE (203) 261-2513 FAX (203) 261-4549
WEB SITE: WWW.ER9.ORG

THOMAS H. McMORRAN, Ed.D.
SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

To: Representative Anne Hughes, District 135

From: Tom McMorran, Ed.D., Superintendent

Date: February 18, 2020

Re: HR 5044

Dear Anne,

I am opposed to the elimination of the religious exemption from certain vaccinations or required medical treatments.

It is my hope that a family's ability to make decisions about their children's medical issues based on the principle of religious exemption would remain in place in Connecticut's schools.

The first clause of the First Amendment of the Bill of Rights states: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof..." I understand that the right to public education does not reside at the Federal level. Under Connecticut §10-204a immunization is required for enrollment in our schools unless a child is homeless and therefore cannot produce records, or has been found eligible for exemption by a medical expert, or for a family's religious convictions.

It is the religious exemption that I write in favor of retaining. It strikes me as unfair to members of such denominations as the Jehovah Witnesses or Christian Scientists that the elimination of the exemption would compel them to choose between the tenets of their faith and the education of their children.

In Germany, from 1933 when Hitler came to power through the end of the Reich in 1945, all citizens were required to take an oath to Adolf Hitler, accepting him as their Führer. We might take a moment to recognize that among the many millions of ordinary people who were interned in Concentration Camps, there were special detention centers for religious dissenters who could not and would not take that oath. I do not mean to suggest in any way that the discussions about vaccine-related requirements should be construed as equivalent. Rather, I

wish to point out that citizens who answer to the dictates of their conscience have demonstrated extra-ordinary courage.

A family's right to exercise a decision about their children's medication based on their religious convictions has been in place in Connecticut for six decades. It is my understanding that our overall herd vaccination rate is regularly in the mid-ninetieth percentile.

There are approximately 1,000 schools in Connecticut, and the vast majority of them currently exceed the percent of students with vaccinations at which the benefits of the herd effect come into play.

I respectfully submit that our public health needs should be weighed in balance with families' right to religious decisions.