

Maureen Wheeler, Charlotte, Vermont H98

Thank you Representative Lippert and the rest of the Healthcare Committee for hearing my testimony today. My name is Maureen Wheeler, I am the mother of three sons ages 19, 17 and 14 and we live in Charlotte, VT. We are unfortunately, and reluctantly, the perfect poster family for Philosophical Exemptions. I wish with all my heart that we were not, but we are.

I would like to preface all of this by saying that I understand the people who believe that every child should be vaccinated. I used to be one of those people.

Shortly after my eldest received his MMR at age 13 months, he developed a high fever and mysterious red rash all over his body. We took him to the pediatrician's office and they took a blood sample. We were told not to bring him back in to the office as his blood test came back "inconclusive" for measles and we were told to keep him quarantined. His fever continued to rise and he seemed sicker as each day went by. Another day we were told to drive to the Health Department for another blood draw, this time from his neck. We got the same inconclusive results.

A few days later, we were sent to the hospital parking lot where Dr Raszka, met us with a team of doctors in hazmat looking suits—fully covered and masked. I heard him explaining to the rest of his team that this was a child who had just had an MMR vaccine so they needed to make sure he not come in contact with others as they could not rule out measles. He was worried that they might be seeing the beginning of an epidemic. As he was talking with his team, I heard him bring up that it was possible that my son had gotten a vaccine from a "bad batch". We went home again with orders to keep him quarantined. On day 10 of his fever and rash I made my daily call to the pediatricians office and was desperate for them to do something to help my son. His fever was spiking to 105 degrees, he was listless and appeared to be sliding in and out of consciousness. A different pediatrician was in the office that day and told us to meet him at the hospital. Our son was admitted right away and they began transfusions of gamma globulins. That afternoon I heard Dr Raszka in the hall confronting the doctor who admitted our son because he was

worried about him being in the hospital as he could be putting all of the children on the pediatric floor at risk of contracting measles. Our admitting doctor was arguing back that his working diagnosis was Kawasaki Disease. I recently learned that GlaxoSmithKline acknowledges Kawasaki Disease as a potential reaction from vaccines. I have also read an article from the National Institute of Health raising the question that what is being called Kawasaki Disease could possibly be vaccine-induced cases of atypical measles. We will never know which it was. All tests showed signs of measles but were inconclusive and there is no test for Kawasaki Disease.

We continued to vaccinate.

When this same son received the Varicella vaccine, he proceeded to get chicken pox. I brought him back into our pediatrician and asked how he could possibly have chicken pox if he just had the vaccine. The answer was, "It's a new vaccine and we don't know that much about it." He went on to say, "The kids who get the vaccine are getting a different strain of chicken pox and it's much milder." Our son then went on to contract chicken pox two more times. The last time he had it (on his 5th birthday) both of his brothers ages 2.5 and 5 months contracted it as well. Neither of them seemed sick at all—they had an appetite and seemed content. Our oldest lost his appetite and was listless. He clearly did not have immunity to chicken pox and we feared he would be at a higher risk for shingles, as an adult, yet, we still continued to vaccinate.

Our second son was the picture of robust health. He was developing on or ahead of schedule and was by all accounts an incredibly joyful and outgoing 13 month old. It all changed the day he received the OPV, Hib-PRP-T and MMR shots. He had a very red and swollen lump at an injection site and that night he began to scream a piercing scream and arch his back. There was nothing we could do to comfort him, which was completely atypical in our experience. He became very fussy and agitated the next day. I brought him back to the pediatrician and asked about the abnormal looking lump, and a bright red rash that he developed around his mouth and in his diaper area. I also shared that his urine started to smell very strongly of ammonia. I

was told it meant that he was having difficulty breaking down proteins.

At this point, I knew he was having a bad vaccine reaction as he had such a clear, immediate and direct reaction. His behavior before and after the shot could not have been more drastically different. As the days turned into weeks and months we watched our once robust son just disappear from us. Within two months he had lost almost all of his speech and eye contact. He never smiled or laughed, he would roll his eyes back into his head and rock back and forth most of his waking hours while doing a repetitive rubbing on his face with a stuffed toy over and over and over. He stopped playing with his older brother and he had no interest in interacting with other children. If a stranger spoke to him he would roll up into a tight ball and rock for hours. Our pediatrician continued to tell us that it had nothing to do with the vaccine and we were not getting any help in figuring out what happened to our son. At this point, we finally stopped accepting vaccines. We were not doing well with the odds. None of these reactions were ever reported to VAERS (Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System) and we did not know that it even existed.

We saw a new doctor who ran blood, stool and urine tests on our son. When the results came back, we were sent a packet of information for parents of children with Autism. A speech therapist came to our home weekly. He could not eat anything with dairy in it or his rash would intensify with open wounds and he would thrash around in fits looking like seizures. Before the MMR he had no reaction to dairy. Over the next year and a half we sought out every doctor we could find to help. He saw 17 in all. A doctor of Traditional Chinese Medicine gave him an herbal tincture to take every morning that seemed to keep the out bursts at a minimum, but his underlying symptoms were not going away. One and a half years later he was approaching his third birthday and needed to have a comprehensive speech evaluation done, as he would be switching into a new speech program. The evaluation showed that he was so severely behind in communication skills that he tested below a six-month-old level in several areas.

Around this same time we were referred to a local Naturopath. We had never seen a ND before and did not know what to expect, but

were willing to try anything to help our son at that point. He was the first doctor we had seen, besides the Dr. of Chinese Medicine, who took my concerns about vaccine injury seriously. He treated my son with 2 different remedies and with two doses of a homeopathic MMR antidote. I had not known such a thing existed. Within 24 hours our son began to talk. When his speech therapist arrived at our house two days later he looked at her and said “Hi Cathy, how are you?” She burst into tears and could not believe her eyes or ears. Over the next 2 months he rapidly began to regain speech back to age appropriate level and the violent rash, repetitive behaviors, ammonia smell, and isolation finally disappeared. He began to smile again.

Both boys tested positive for heavy metal toxicity—mercury and aluminum. We had our water and home tested and found no sources of exposure. I had already switched all of our cleaning products, body care products and food over to green organic versions after our eldest was hospitalized. We avoided every toxin we could possibly avoid. Our oldest even had an allergic reaction to the dyes in Benedryl, so we had to add dyes to the long list of things to avoid.

By the time our eldest entered first grade, he was diagnosed with Aspergers. School was very difficult for him socially and the teachers struggled to reach him. He appeared drugged most of the time. We tried every therapy possible: art therapy, play therapy, movement therapy, sensory integration therapy, eye movement therapy, and private tutoring. Both boys were tested and diagnosed with severe dyslexia, dysgraphia, and executive functioning struggles.

Jumping ahead, 6 years ago I was fortunate to have Dr. Mark Hyman, MD as a teacher when I attended The Institute of Integrative Nutrition. He is a world-renowned doctor of Functional Medicine, expert in the field of epigenetics, and is currently the head of The Cleveland Clinic Center for Functional Medicine. He spoke about Autism, Aspergers, ADD/ADHD. Depression, Dementia and Alzheimer’s all being sets of symptoms stemming from the same problem of too many toxins paired with critical deficiencies. He spoke of healing and reversing these “incurables” through proper elimination of toxins and the addition of key nutrients specific to an individual’s needs. He explained that certain toxins trigger genes to turn on or off. At this point I knew that I needed my sons to be seen in his office.

Our two oldest sons, my husband and myself all had complete work ups done in Mark Hyman's office. The testing cost over \$10,000 for each of us and was out of pocket as we were out of network, out of state and self referred. (We were even audited by the IRS because our uncovered medial expenses were so high.) They did extensive genetic and metabolic testing and found that both of my boys share the same genetic mutations that I have. I have 4 different autoimmune conditions and a complicated medical history. They are missing a gene that allows them to detoxify, they have several genetic mutations affecting methylation, and they have damaged mitochondria, along with a long list of deficiencies and sensitivities. As we were reviewing the test results with the doctor, we were told, "Your boys are definitely not good candidates for vaccines." At the time I was not really concerned about that as we had stopped vaccinating a decade earlier and had been using a philosophical exemption for school. It took us over ten years, and hundreds of thousands of dollars, to get to the point where we discovered that they were not suffering from "coincidences", but rather underlying genetic mutations that made them susceptible to many things including vaccines. We spent everything we had on trying to find answers.

Our second son recently had a violent reaction to the medication he was given for Giardia. He was vomiting bile and extremely sick. It resulted in intestinal damage and his having to restrict over 130 foods from his diet in an attempt to heal his condition. I recently discovered that the drug he was given for Giardia, is contraindicated for his genetic profile. Even Ibuprofen is on the list for my sons. They all have extensive lists of foods they cannot eat and environmental toxins they must avoid. Clearly the responsible practice of medicine is not one size fits all.

The genetic mutations that my son's and I share will be with us for the rest of our lives. Just this past October I went into anaphylaxis during a routine eye exam after the doctor put drops in my eyes. 911 was called and I ended up in the ER. Even though we have diets and supplements to support us, we will always need to be vigilant about foods, additives, toxins and medications. The reality is that all people simply do not have the same capacity to flush out toxins from their

bodies. Some people have very bad and life altering reactions to vaccines which contain known neurotoxins and carcinogens. It is unfathomable to me that parent's rights to informed consent and choice could be taken away. If we had not had philosophical exemptions as an option, my sons could not have attended school. If vaccines had been mandated, I shudder to think what their fate would have been. They certainly would not be the high functioning young men that they are now.

Every legislator that I have spoken to says we should be using a medical exemption, yet we do not qualify under the 2012 rewriting of medical exemptions. Our doctor who identified these genetic factors is out of state and, from past experience, all of our Vermont doctors wanted us to use the philosophical exemption rather than get involved in signing off on a medical exemption because there is so much pressure on them if they do. The team of doctors that we use for our family includes 4 MDs and 2 NDs. They all support our decision to stop vaccinating, yet we have not been able to get a medical exemption. Even if we are able to somehow get one, the reality is that most families who have had children suffer adverse reactions simply could not afford the path we have taken to find the underlying causes. The Philosophical exemption is critically needed.

If Vermont truly wants to create policy that results in higher vaccination rates, I would recommend that you stop looking at taking away a parents's right to informed consent and start looking at the following:

1. We need an examination and restructuring of our current vaccination schedule
2. We need to get neurotoxic substances out of vaccines
3. We should be debating the necessity of mandating vaccinations for non-communicable diseases
4. We should retract the law passed in 1986 that exempted vaccine manufacturers from liability in the U.S.
5. We should be testing children for genetic susceptibility to toxin-induced disorders prior to starting an inoculation schedule
6. We should be challenging the CDC on its guidelines of what denotes a medical exemption

7. We should stop punishing Doctors for providing medical exemptions

As a parent it is my biggest responsibility to take care of my children to the best of my ability and to make informed decisions that best serve them. I am confident that if any legislator lived through our experience they would feel the exact same way about the necessity of informed consent and vaccine choice.

Thank you very much.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

IMMUNOCOMPROMISED: I have been hearing a lot about the parents who use the philosophical exemptions somehow not caring for immunocompromised children. This is an entirely false and unfair accusation. As a parent who has laid next to my sick child in a hospital bed, my heart breaks for any family that has a child suffering a medical crisis—it is terrifying. All parents want their children to be safe and healthy. My heart goes out to all of those children and their families.

There are 80 communicable diseases that are reportable to the health department and that does not include common colds. Only 15 of those 80 diseases have vaccines available, so there is a risk of an immunocompromised child becoming ill from many other diseases besides those for which there are vaccines, and are at potential risk from children or adults in any public setting, including schools, hospitals, grocery stores, places of worship, restaurants and playgrounds to name a few.

It is a well established fact, written on the package inserts that come with vaccines, that live-virus vaccines have a period of shedding after they are administered. This is why cancer treatment centers have signs on the door saying those recently vaccinated are not allowed to enter.

If the health of the immunocompromised is really the issue here, shouldn't the state also protect that immunocompromised child against the vaccinated children in schools who are shedding live viruses? Depending on the specific vaccine, this shedding could be for a period of two to four weeks.

If you vote to eliminate exemptions and remove my non-infected sons from school, will you also pass an amendment that says all recently vaccinated children must be quarantined? Eliminating the philosophical exemption will not make Vermont a healthier state, nor will it eliminate the risk of an immunocompromised child becoming ill. It will simply force more children out of receiving an education and force families to move out of state.

GMO's & VACCINES: I am incredibly proud that the legislators in Vermont had the strength and conviction to be the first state in the nation to require labeling GMOs. The campaign was focused on the right to know the ingredients so that consumers can make an informed choice about what to put in their bodies. Do you realize that vaccines contain genetically modified ingredients? Do you plan to label those? Do we not have the same right-to-know and choose what is being injected into our bodies as we have over what we ingest?

INFECTED vs HEALTHY: HepB is a disease with two primary risk factors: sexual activity with an infected partner; and sharing dirty needles. These are not risks typically associated with childhood, yet the HepB vaccines are given on the first day of life and again at 2 and 4 months. Many parents that I know choose to delay this vaccine until their child is a teenager. Making this choice to delay, would make that child not fully vaccinated. The rationale for this is hard to understand. What is even harder to understand is why a child infected with HepB is not considered a public health risk and is allowed to attend school with total confidentiality. The same is true for students who are HIV+. And yet a student who is entirely healthy, but has not had the HepB vaccine, would not be allowed to attend school.

Again, thank you so much for your time and consideration.