WRITTEN TESTIMONY FOR THE RECORD

MN SENATE HEARING SF3439/HF3239
USE OF AN EXEMPTION TO IMMUNIZATION DUE TO CONSCIENTIOUSLY HELD BELIEFS PROHIBITION FOR IMMUNIZATION AGAINST MEASLES, MUMPS AND RUBELLA

MINNESOTA SENATE | HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE
MARCH 17TH, 2026, 8:30AM

In Support of Parental Rights, Religious Freedom, and the Right of Conscience

Chair and Members of the Committee,

We are submitting testimony on behalf of Minnesotans for Health & Parental Rights, a community of families, healthcare practitioners, legal professionals, educators, childcare providers, and business owners that has existed in Minnesota for more than a decade.

We respectfully urge you to protect Minnesota families' longstanding rights to religious freedom, parental authority, and freedom of conscience in medical decision-making.

Under current Minnesota law, parents must submit vaccination records for every child enrolled in daycare, public school, charter school, private school, or, yes, even homeschool. Families who cannot accept one or more vaccines may file either:

• a medical exemption signed by a physician, or
• a notarized conscientious exemption

This framework has served Minnesota well for decades. It allows the state to promote public health recommendations while also respecting the diverse beliefs, medical considerations, and moral convictions of Minnesota families.

Conscientious exemptions are not a loophole, they are a recognition that Minnesota is a diverse state where families hold deeply held religious and moral beliefs that must be respected in a free society.

For many families and faith communities, the MMR vaccine raises serious moral concerns because of its historical development using aborted fetal cell lines. Regardless of one's personal views on abortion or vaccination, eliminating conscientious exemptions removes the ability for individuals of faith to follow their beliefs regarding participation in that process and what they permit to be administered to their own bodies or their children's bodies.

The Minnesota Constitution strongly protects freedom of conscience. Article I, Section 16 states:

"The right of every man to worship God according to the dictates of his own conscience shall never be infringed… nor shall any control of or interference with the rights of conscience be permitted."

Similarly, the First Amendment of the United States Constitution prohibits laws that interfere with the free exercise of religion.

The United States Supreme Court has repeatedly affirmed these protections. In *Clay v. United States*, the Court unanimously recognized conscientious objection as protected under the First Amendment. In *Welsh v. United States*, the Court further clarified that even non-religious moral or ethical beliefs held with the strength of traditional religious convictions are protected.

The Minnesota Human Rights Act and Minnesota administrative rules also prohibit discrimination based on religion or creed in many settings..

Removing conscientious exemptions places Minnesota families in an impossible position: they must choose between participating in education and childcare systems or remaining faithful to their sincerely held beliefs. Because Minnesota's homeschool statutes rely on this same immunization law, eliminating exemptions here removes that option as well. Families are left with no educational pathway that respects their convictions, forcing some to consider compromising their conscience or leaving their homes, businesses, and communities in search of a state where they can live and educate their children consistent with their faith.

It is also important to recognize that many families who file exemptions are not opposed to vaccination altogether. Many children are fully or partially vaccinated but use exemptions for specific doses or timing adjustments due to medical concerns, alternate schedules, or personal convictions. The exemption process allows families to work with their healthcare providers and make individualized medical decisions for their children.

Whether families ultimately choose the full vaccine schedule, an alternative one or none, medical decisions should remain between parents, their healthcare providers, and their conscience, not dictated by the state without accommodation for deeply held beliefs.

Minnesota has long prided itself on valuing diversity, inclusion, and civil liberties. Religious freedom and freedom of conscience are foundational American rights, not privileges granted only when convenient.

A free and diverse society must protect the right of families to follow their faith and conscience, especially when making deeply personal medical decisions for their children.

We respectfully ask the committee to uphold these principles and protect the rights of Minnesota families to follow their faith and conscience while participating fully in education and childcare.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Minnesotans FOR HEALTH & PARENTAL Rights | Protecting Children by Empowering Parents parentalrights.org