

## The Slippery Slope

The Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) is quick to assure concerned individuals that they only want to eliminate the personal conviction exemption for school and daycare entry in Wisconsin. But the reality is, this is just the first step. If they can convince lawmakers to support the removal of one exemption, they can and certainly will try to eliminate others, including our religious exemption to vaccination.

### Vermont

In 2015, lawmakers in Vermont voted by a narrow margin to eliminate its personal conviction waiver to vaccination. In 2019, a bill was introduced to eliminate Vermont's religious exemption.<sup>1</sup> A similar bill was reintroduced in 2021.<sup>2</sup>

### California

Lawmakers in California voted to remove its philosophical exemption waiver in 2015. California did not have a religious exemption and was left with only a medical exemption.<sup>3</sup> In 2019, lawmakers severely restricted the medical exemption and almost no one qualifies for one any longer. Even a child who should qualify for a medical exemption would likely never find a doctor willing to risk investigation or punishment for writing one.<sup>4</sup>

### New York

On June 13, 2019, the New York legislature quickly pushed a bill to repeal the religious exemption to vaccination through both the Assembly and Senate in one day with no public hearings.<sup>5</sup> In addition to removing its religious exemption, NY tightened its medical exemption and most children no longer qualify for one.<sup>6</sup>

### Maine

In May 2019, Maine Governor Janet Mills signed a law removing both the philosophical and religious vaccine exemptions.<sup>7</sup> Vaccine choice advocates were successful in putting the issue on the ballot for a "people's veto" in March 2020. They were, however, unsuccessful in overturning the law. Big Pharma spent over \$500,000 to ensure that vaccine choice would no longer exist in Maine.<sup>8</sup>

### Connecticut

On April 28, 2021, the Connecticut governor signed a law that eliminated the religious exemption to vaccination in all schools, colleges, and daycares, leaving only the medical exemption.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Barcellos K Bill would remove religious exemption for vaccinations *Rutland Herald* Feb 18, 2019 (<https://tinyurl.com/y6mw8pz6>)

<sup>2</sup> Flanders C. State Rep to Introduce Bill That Would Nix Religious Vaccination Exemption *Seven Days*. Jan. 22, 2021 (<https://tinyurl.com/5xamt698>)

<sup>3</sup> California Senate Bill No. 277 (<https://tinyurl.com/n8z8fbr>)

<sup>4</sup> California Legislative Information SB 276 (<https://tinyurl.com/y6s2f74r>)

<sup>5</sup> New York State Assembly. A02371 Bill to Repeal Exemption to Vaccination for Religious Beliefs. Bill History Summary of Actions. June 13, 2019. (<https://tinyurl.com/y4udhusr>)

<sup>6</sup> DiMascio S Local parents say medical exemptions for vaccines in NYS is near impossible New 10 ABC Sep. 20, 2019 (<https://tinyurl.com/y58ov287>)

<sup>7</sup> Gov. Mills kicks off flip-flop season killing religious vaccine exemption, names CDC head with troubles in Illinois *Maine Examiner* May 26, 2019 (<https://tinyurl.com/y3so48ku>)

<sup>8</sup> Andrews C Maine voters uphold new law tightening school vaccination requirements *Bangor Daily News* Mar. 4, 2020 (<https://tinyurl.com/2fke52mz>)

<sup>9</sup> Latina J CT becomes 6th state in nation to ban religious exemption for childhood inoculations News 8 wtnh.com Apr.29, 2021 (<https://tinyurl.com/33pj9yzn>)