

To all those considering LC21, I offer this cautionary tale. In 1994 my son was diagnosed with autism. Within a few years of his diagnosis, many parents and a few doctors (most vocally Dr. Andrew Wakefield of England) were spreading theories about vaccines being responsible for the surge of autism diagnoses around the developed world. One thing that fueled this fire was government indemnification of vaccine manufacturers, protecting them from legal suits if their vaccines caused adverse effects in some of the children who received them. As many parents of autistic children saw it, this was letting drug companies "off the hook" for due diligence. These parents became distrustful, not just of the pharmaceutical companies, but of government vaccine recommendations, and many of them refused to let their children be vaccinated. Still today, after much scientific research has indicated that vaccines are not causative of autism, a significant portion of our population distrusts and does not comply with vaccine recommendations from CDC.

There's a parallel between this situation and what is proposed in LC21 that I would like you to consider. If our state indemnifies schools against legal action for neglecting to protect children, youth, and staff from COVID, that may cause many parents to distrust our schools and refuse to send their children back in person once that is recommended by health officials. Parents who don't send their kids to school are unlikely to vote for school funding. Leaving the law as it is now may assuage some people's fears about returning to in-person learning because they will have confidence that schools will be very motivated to take all reasonable health & safety precautions, as they should be.

Respectfully,

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