

To the editor, Mt. Desert Islander, for May 21, 2015

Increasingly, our governments are moving to mandate vaccination, by removing or seriously limiting grounds for vaccination exemptions. The Islander's May 1 "Immunization Sanity" editorial approved of Maine's current legislative efforts in this direction.

I asked a Maine vaccine expert about this. A closer look reveals the very shaky scientific grounds on which this whole movement rests.

The bedrock claim of proponents of mandatory vaccination is that the only way to protect kids -- particularly those with weak immune systems -- from communicable diseases is to vaccinate everybody. This supposedly confers a "herd immunity" on the population. "Herd immunity" means keeping the number of cases so small that there is no significant spread. Sounds reasonable.

However, herd immunity requires vaccines that are long-lasting and highly effective. Unfortunately, as a rule, they aren't.

Vaccine effectiveness rates tend to run from 90% all the way down to 60%, depending on the vaccine. For many, effectiveness has not even been determined yet. The CDC put this year's flu vaccine's effectiveness at only 20%, yet we are told our health depends on a flu shot.

On the other hand, vaccination exemptions in Maine have only a small impact. Maine's vaccination rate is up at 95-99%, depending on the vaccine.

So which is the greater threat to "herd immunity" -- exemptions or vaccine ineffectiveness?

By kindergarten, Maine's kids are at 95% on their state-required vaccines. The 76% figure cited by the Islander editorial apparently referred to CDC-recommended vaccines. That number is low only because Maine sensibly requires only half of those vaccines.

Maine currently has two legislative bills to eliminate or reduce non-religious non-medical vaccination exemptions. Both are based on the questionable "herd-immunity-by-vaccines" idea. Both ignore the significant data on vaccine-induced health damage.

Like NSA spying, they're another example of a rapidly encroaching government control of our lives. Please consider contacting Reps. Hubbell (288-3947) or Kumiega (479-5459) and Sen. Langley (287-1505) and ask that they oppose bills LD606 and LD471.

Dick Atlee