

Honorable Members of the Rhode Island General Assembly,

My name is Jared Pierce Sanchez, and I stand before you as a medical student, a future physician, and a firm believer in informed consent and medical freedom. I urge you to pass House Bill 5856 to ensure that no Rhode Islander is forced into a medical decision under duress, threat, or coercion.

Throughout history, medical ethics have upheld the right to bodily autonomy. Yet, during the COVID-19 pandemic, institutions ignored these principles, wielding mandates that forced individuals to choose between their education, their livelihoods, and their sincerely held beliefs. I know this firsthand. Despite Brown University granting my religious exemption to the COVID-19 vaccine, I was blocked from completing my medical training by its affiliated hospital systems, which refused accommodations while benefiting from federal and state funding. I was not given a choice—I was given an ultimatum.

House Bill 5856 restores the balance. It prohibits vaccine, testing, and mask mandates without providing exemptions for personal, medical, or religious reasons. It prevents discrimination against those who exercise their right to make informed medical decisions. This bill is not about restricting access to vaccines or public health measures—it is about ensuring they remain voluntary.

Federal policy is shifting to recognize these abuses. The COVID-19 emergency is over, and recent executive orders prohibit federal funding for institutions enforcing vaccine mandates. Rhode Island must not lag behind in protecting individual freedoms. No person should be forced to choose between their faith, their health, or their future.

The principle is simple: medical decisions belong to the individual, not the government, not employers, and not schools. I urge you to uphold that principle and pass House Bill 5856. Our rights, our ethics, and our future depend on it.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jared Pierce Sanchez". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jared Pierce Sanchez, B.A.

MD Candidate, Class of 2027

Sunday, March 16, 2025 at 11:21 AM