



June 19, 2017

The Honorable Ron Young
Chairman, Economic Development, Commerce & Labor Committee
Ohio House of Representatives
77 South High Street, 13th Floor
Columbus, OH 43215

Re: Opposition to HB 193

Dear Representative Young:

The Ohio Hospital Association, along with the Ohio State Medical Association and the Ohio Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics, would like to thank you for including us in the ongoing dialogue surrounding House Bill 193. We appreciate the opportunity to share our perspective on the legislation addressing employers' rights to implement safety precautions for influenza.

OHA, OSMA and Ohio AAP oppose HB 193 for reasons including the following:

- The flu vaccine is the most effective method to prevent influenza, a serious disease that can lead to health complications and death, especially for high risk patients.
- The flu vaccine is associated with decreasing health care costs, including reduced risk of illness, work absenteeism, antibiotic use and medical visits.
- As employers, it is imperative that hospitals have the flexibility to implement health and safety precautions they deem most appropriate for carrying out their missions to provide high quality patient care and protect the well-being of their employees.

OHA and Ohio physicians are concerned that this legislation threatens the health and safety of patients, employees and the community. It is important to understand that influenza is a serious health risk, and that nationally, approximately 266,000 people are hospitalized and 36,000 people die annually as a result of the disease. The flu vaccine is the most effective method to prevent influenza, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends all U.S. health care workers get vaccinated annually against influenza.

Some individuals, such as older adults, pregnant women and very young children, as well as those with certain medical conditions are highly susceptible to serious complications from the flu. Health care personnel have frequent contact with these high risk patients in many settings. These employees can serve as a vehicle to transmit influenza before symptoms develop. In fact, as many as 25 percent of health care personnel with the flu may have minimal or no symptoms, but can still transmit infection.

Hospitals and physicians are also continually being asked to help reduce health care costs. Influenza vaccinations have been associated with reduced risk of illness, work absenteeism, antibiotic use and medical visits. Medicare quality reporting standards and Health and the Human Service Healthy Patients 2020 initiative both have standards for the vaccination of health care employees. Many legislators at the state level also have been pushing for hospitals and other health care entities to move toward value-based purchasing. The Medicare value-based purchasing program includes vaccination of healthcare employees.

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Finally, we must reiterate how important it is that hospitals and physicians have the flexibility to manage their facilities and practices the way they feel is best to protect health and safety. Currently, HB 193 infringes upon the rights of private employers to craft internal policies that best serve the patients for whom they provide care, as well as their staff members.

Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Rick Frank at rick.frank@ohiohospitals.org or 614-384-9136.

Sincerely,



Rick Frank
Senior Director, Government Affairs
Ohio Hospital Association



Monica Hueckel
Director, Government Affairs
Ohio State Medical Association



Melissa Wervey Arnold
Chief Executive Officer
Ohio Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics

cc: The Honorable Christina Hagan