



House Bill 193 – Opponent Testimony
Ohio House Economic Development, Commerce & Labor Committee
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Chairman Young, Vice Chair DeVitis, Ranking Member Lepore-Hagan, and members of the Ohio House Economic Development, Commerce & Labor Committee, thank you for allowing me to provide opponent testimony on House Bill 193. My name is Dr. Steven Gordon, and I am the Chairman of the Department of Infectious Disease at Cleveland Clinic.

House Bill 193 would prohibit an employer from taking an adverse employment action against a person who has not been or will not be vaccinated against influenza. As one of the second largest employer in the state of Ohio (with over 51,000 employees), and as a leading healthcare provider, Cleveland Clinic has several concerns with this legislation.

Influenza transmission to patients by healthcare personnel is well documented. Vaccination remains the single most effective preventive measure available against influenza and can prevent many illnesses, deaths, and losses in productivity.

Currently, the policy at Cleveland Clinic is such that employees must receive an influenza vaccination shot annually during flu season (generally October through April). Exemptions are granted for religious or medical reasons. Flu vaccination shots are free to all employees, and we require that all employees (clinical and non-clinical) receive vaccination.

These policies are in place in order to protect the health of the patients of our hospitals, particularly those who have compromised immune systems. This would include the elderly, newborns, pregnant women, and those patients with specific diseases or ailments such as pneumonia, cancer, or other chronic disorders.

Influenza is a virus that can be fatal, and should be taken seriously. According to the Journal of the American Medical Association, approximately 36,000 deaths and more than 200,000 hospitalizations are directly associated with influenza every year in the United States. Thus, flu vaccination should be strongly encouraged for the general population, and should be mandatory for health care workers. To put it simply, responsible vaccination policies save lives. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), one death is prevented for every 4,000 people vaccinated against the flu.

Ensuring that appropriate flu vaccination is taking place not only reduces the risk of more serious health outcomes, but it also saves the health care system cost by resulting in lower rates of hospitalization.

According to the CDC, flu vaccination was associated with a 71% reduction in flu-related hospitalizations among adults of all ages and a 77% reduction among adults aged 50 years or older. A CDC study published on August 2, 2016 provides even more evidence on the benefits of flu vaccination among older adults. The study looked at flu-associated hospitalizations among



people 50 and older during the 2010-2011 flu season and found that people who had gotten a flu vaccine reduced their risk of flu-associated hospitalization by half.

A recent study also showed that the flu vaccine reduced children's risk of flu-related pediatric intensive care unit (PICU) admission by 74%. We have a particular responsibility to protect the most vulnerable of our patient population, children and older adults, from influenza and influenza related conditions.

It is also important to note that, in 2012, the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services and the Joint Commission have expanded influenza vaccination performance standards for health care personnel, requiring that hospital vaccination rates are consistent with the 90% rate established in the national influenza initiatives for 2020.

Once again, as a leading healthcare organization committed to decreasing the impact of infectious disease and improving health outcomes, the Cleveland Clinic voices its opposition to HB 193.