

September 12, 2017

The Honorable Ron Young
77 South High Street
13th Floor, Riffe Building
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Dear Chairman Young, Ranking Member Lapore-Hagan, and members of the House Economic Development, Commerce and Labor Committee:

I write today in opposition to House Bill 193, legislation to prohibit an employer from taking an adverse employment action against a person who has not been or will not be vaccinated against influenza.

Founded in 1884, the Columbus Chamber of Commerce is the leading voice of business within the 11-county Columbus Region, with almost 1,400 members employing over 500,000 workers.

Ensuring businesses can operate efficiently in a competitive business environment that allows them to grow and thrive is a primary principle of the Columbus Chamber's Public Policy Agenda, which is approved by our full board of directors. Two stated tenets of our Agenda are to protect employers' ability to regulate their workplace and maintain sound human resource policies, and to oppose unnecessary laws that increase the cost of doing business in Ohio.

The Chamber opposes H.B. 193 because it would significantly curtail employers' right to regulate the use of the influenza vaccination in their workplace. The flu vaccine is effective in maintaining a healthy and productive workforce, and preventing the spread of illness to and from patients in a medical setting. The Center for Disease Control and Prevent (CDC) consistently finds that vaccines reduce the risk of flu illness by about 50-60% among the overall population during peak seasons, and reduced children's risk of flu-related pediatric intensive care unit admission by 74% during flu seasons from 2010-2012.¹

According to the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services Bureau of Labor Market Information, Ohio has a greying labor force.² Central Ohio's population of 65 years or older is expected to double over the next 35 years. Statewide, nearly a quarter of the population aged 55 or older is still working, and in Columbus, a staggering 44% of older adults are in the labor force.³ Baby boomers are expected to continue working for longer and at rates much higher than prior generations. ODJFS recently stated, "The aging of the baby boom cohort will represent one of the largest public policy issues Ohio and the United States will face in the next ten years." The CDC recognizes that people 65 years and older are at greater risk of serious complications from the flu, and that the best prevention tool is vaccination. Instead of enacting policies to curb employers' ability to foster a healthy and productive work environment, we encourage this committee to focus on combating the impending loss of human capital by protecting the health of those that wish to stay in the workforce longer. H.B. 193 does just the opposite.

Not only is the flu vaccine used by private employers to promote the health and safety of their employees and the community, but it also assists in keeping insurance and medical costs down. For the aforementioned reasons, the Columbus Chamber urges you to oppose H.B. 193.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Holly Gross
Vice President, Government Relations

¹ Center for Disease Control and Prevention: <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/qa/vaccineeffect.htm>

² Ohio's Greying Labor Force: Aging Through 2017: <http://ohiolmi.com/research/publications/2016Graying.pdf>

³ Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission's Age-Friendly Columbus Findings Report, February 2017: <http://agefriendlycolumbus.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Age-Friendly-Columbus-Findings-Report.pdf>