

September 7, 2017

The Honorable Christina Hagan
77 South High Street, 13th Floor
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Dear Representative Hagan:

On behalf of UC Health, we respectfully submit our strong opposition to proposed House Bill 193. If passed, HB 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. We believe that influenza vaccination of health care workers is an important patient safety initiative that also protects our workers. Requiring vaccination is absolutely essential if we are to achieve our safety goals for patient and worker protection.

UC Health is the Southwest Ohio region's only adult academic health system and provides the highest level of specialty and subspecialty care unavailable anywhere else in our community. We provide essential health care services to our region's most vulnerable and sickest patients. Our policy requiring all clinical and non-clinical employees to receive vaccinations, with exceptions granted for religious or medical reasons, are designed solely to protect the health of our patients in our hospitals, including the elderly, newborns, pregnant women, and those patients with specific diseases such as pneumonia, cancer, or other chronic disorders.

Influenza can be particularly dangerous to patients in a hospital. Therefore, protecting inpatients from being exposed to influenza is an important safety initiative. Studies have shown that up to 25% of non-immunized health care workers will be infected with influenza virus during an outbreak. People who get influenza typically are infectious for a day or two before they develop significant symptoms. During this interval, asymptomatic but infectious health care workers can be a "vector" for the transmission of influenza to the patients for whom they are caring. The only way to protect patients is to prevent influenza infection in as many health care workers as possible, and the only way to do that is through vaccination.

Restricting the ability of hospitals and health care systems to require influenza vaccination on behalf of patient and worker safety would be similar to restricting our requirement that employees wear personal protective equipment when handling blood and infectious body fluids. An effective influenza vaccination program is absolutely vital to ensuring a safe hospital environment.

UC Health is steadfastly committed to delivering patient care in a safe environment. Our patients expect and deserve nothing less. We stand firm in opposition to House Bill 193. Please do not hesitate to contact me or our Vice President of Government Relations, Candace Sabers, at Candace.sabers@uchealth.com if you have questions.

Sincerely,



Fred Lucas, MD
Chief Medical Officer
UC Health

C: Chairman Ron Young, Ohio House Economic, Development, Commerce and Labor Committee