



Testimony before the
House Health Committee

House Bill 559
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Immunization Process Improvement Bill (HB 559)
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Chairman Huffman, ranking member Antonio, and members of the House Health Committee, I am Julie Miller, Health Commissioner of the Knox County Health District, and President-Elect of the Association of Ohio Health Commissioners (AOHC). Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony, on behalf of my health district and AOHC, in support of House Bill 559. House Bill 559 proposes improvements in the process by which required childhood immunizations are reported and tracked by preschools, daycare and public schools in Ohio.

Immunization/vaccination is one of greatest public health successes over the last 100 years - it just makes sense. Yet, according to CDC National Immunization Program only 68% of Ohio Children 2014-2016 received the recommended series of vaccines or the 4:3:1.3.3.1.4. series - the vaccines that are required for school.

Currently, there is no accurate data on the number of children who have been "opted out" or "waived out" of receiving vaccines. These children are at risk should an outbreak of a vaccine preventable disease occur in their preschool, day care or public school. School and public health officials have no way of knowing what children are at risk and should be removed from potential exposure. A standardization for immunization records, including waiver forms, would improve the ability to protect all children in all child care or educational settings. HB 559 allows parents to continue to opt out of vaccine but establishes a mechanism for tracking of those families, which allows for informed decision-making should an outbreak occur.

As the county that was the epicenter of the 2014 measles outbreak in Ohio, we were witness to the impact of a vaccine preventable outbreak on a population that is typically not vaccinated. Many Amish communities avoid immunizations due to religious reasons; however, during the 2014 outbreak thousands of Amish families chose to be immunized because they recognized the serious threat to their friends and family.

It is very important to note that this bill does not change the vaccination requirements currently in place, nor does it change the opt out provisions currently allowed in Ohio. Further, it protects the confidentiality of individual students, by requiring only summary information to be reported by the educational settings to the state departments of Education and Health.

I ask for your timely consideration and support of House Bill 559. Thank you for your time and interest in this critical issue. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.