

Testimony of Alexa Yutzy

Ohio Health Committee

Re: House Bill 559

Opposition to proposed changes to immunization exemptions and tracking processes

05/21/2018

Chairman Huffman, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Antonio, and honorable members of the Health Committee:

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to express my opposition to HB 559. My name is Alexa Yutzy and I would like to introduce myself to you and explain why HB 559 is a bill that does not have my support, and in fact, calls for my time, energy, and resources to actively oppose. I am a well-educated professional with degrees concerning both topics of this bill: a B.A. in Biblical Studies and a B.S. in nursing. I am a devout Christian, a Registered Nurse, but also a mother that has to use my knowledge to blend these two worlds together to make healthcare decisions. Let me not mince words when I say that the medical field holds no authority over my religious beliefs, and that my convictions come first when choosing which health care options to utilize.

Just as I know the national and state constitutions guarantee religious freedom without condition of approval from a medical professional, I also know that the medical field has codes of conduct by which each career path vows to abide. Many of these codes include statements that the health team member will avoid coercion, paternalism, and interference with patient autonomy. H.B. 559 is in direct conflict with all of these things by belittling religious beliefs and forcing a patient into an appointment in order to attempt to change their mind about a medical procedure that they have thoughtfully declined. There are other concerns with H.B. 559; a sample of the form parents must sign has not been finalized. What information will be included on it? What does this information have to do with people who are objecting to vaccination based on religious beliefs or reason of conscience? Additionally, there will be undue burden on parents, most of who are more educated than their provider on this special topic, to sacrifice their time and finances for this unnecessary medical visit - and the medical office gets the bonus of being paid for it! This newly proposed financial gain from a previously free and inherent freedom of religion and conscience gives off the appearance of corruption.

If you lean towards supporting this bill, I hope that you will reconsider taking away religious freedom and parental choice of the people you represent. If you oppose this bill, I ask that you work diligently to not see it passed through committee. When someone is under my care, as their nurse I advocate completely for their freedom to choose what medicines and procedures they desire. I beg for the same code of conduct to be upheld from my legislators.

Thank you again for the chance to explain my opposition to H.B. 559. If you have any questions for me and my experience with vaccines both personally and professionally, I would be more than happy to discuss the issue further.