

Testimony of Michelle Cotterman, RN
Oppose House Bill 559
Health Committee
May 23, 2018

Chairman Huffman, Vice-chair Gavarone, Ranking member Antonio and honorable members of the Health committee thank you for allowing me to speak today about why I oppose House Bill 559.

My name is Michelle Cotterman, I am a registered nurse and the mother of two beautiful and robustly healthy children. I want to make a couple of statements about prior testimony and then I will discuss why I do not like this bill.

We have heard repeatedly that this proposal is riding on the back of protecting immunocompromised. We should be clear that some vaccines do not prevent infection or transmission, for example the acellular pertussis or whooping cough vaccine. This is an issue I am very familiar with as I took my concern to the Ohio Public Health Advisory Board in the summer of 2017. I would be happy to share my report and subsequent video discussion to anyone who is interested. Acellular pertussis vaccine has been shown that it can, at best, provide symptomless infection as can be seen from this study by an FDA scientist titled *"Acellular pertussis vaccines protect against disease but fail to prevent infection and transmission in a nonhuman primate model"*¹. We also get an idea of the problem from Christopher Gill, associate professor of global health at Boston University School of Public Health: *"This disease is back because we didn't really understand how our immune defenses against whooping cough worked, and did not understand how the vaccines needed to work to prevent it. Instead we layered assumptions upon assumptions, and now find ourselves in the uncomfortable position of admitting that we may have made some crucial errors. This is definitely not where we thought we'd be in 2017."*²

If we are truly talking about transparency and protecting immunocompromised children shouldn't we be making rates of infection and the vaccination status of those infected public knowledge as well?

One of the sponsors used two meningitis deaths in Tuscarawas county in December of 2017 as a crutch to support the need for this proposal. However, those deaths were not vaccine preventable. There were not any cases of meningococcal disease in Tuscarawas county the last

¹ Warfel J, et al. Acellular pertussis vaccines protect against disease but fail to prevent infection and transmission in a nonhuman primate model. PNAS 2014; 111(2):787-792.

² Resurgence of Whooping Cough May Owe to Vaccine's Inability to Prevent Infections
www.bu.edu/sph/2017/09/21/resurgence-of-whooping-cough-may-owe-to-vaccines-inability-to-prevent-infections/

quarter of 2017 as reported by the Ohio Department of Health³. The meningitis vaccine recently added to ORC covers 4 strains of meningococcal bacteria out of the 13 known strain types....A, C, W, and Y⁴....on average, in Ohio, we have 6 to 7 infections from these strains per year across the entire population⁵. An exceptionally rare infection. The vaccine, however, as reported by the CDC has a 6.6% serious adverse event rate, as in resulted in death, life-threatening illness, hospitalization, prolongation of hospitalization, or permanent disability⁶

So, what's wrong with this proposal?

1. Public tracking forces parents to participate in an electronic database and creates an environment of discrimination. How does the State intend to ensure the information input into an electronic database is secure?
2. ORC already provides a vaccination report be sent to the director of the ODH. ORC 3313.67 states: *Annually by the fifteenth day of October, the board shall report a summary, by school, of the immunization records of all initial entry pupils in the district to the director of health, on forms prescribed by the director.*⁷ If there are gaps in this reporting, this is an issue of enforcing an existing law NOT creating a new one.
3. Requiring a signature for non-medical exemptions from a medical professional that is defined by this proposal forces parents into a healthcare system in direct violation of our constitutional⁸ and parental rights and is absolutely an interference of our religious freedoms⁹. It is appropriate for a parent seeking a medical exemption to inquire with a medical professional. However, it is inappropriate for those seeking non-medical exemptions.

I became aware of vaccine ingredients after my daughter experienced an allergic reaction to a series of vaccines she received. As an individual who is pro-life and who has firm religious beliefs, I choose to raise my children in a certain way. We are conscious consumers and therefore consuming products that utilize aborted fetal tissue in their production is not acceptable to me. There is no justification for that. I was not made aware of this fact by the

³ Quarterly Summary of Selected Reportable Infectious Diseases, Ohio Fourth Quarter, 2017 October 1, 2017 – December 30, 2017.

<http://www.odh.ohio.gov/-/media/ODH/ASSETS/Files/bidstats/2017/17TablesQ4.pdf?la=en>

⁴ 2016-2017 Ohio School Entry Requirement for Meningococcal Vaccine

www.odh.ohio.gov/-/media/ODH/ASSETS/Files/bid/immunizations/Ohio-School-Entry-Immunization-Requirement-Meningococcal-2016-2017-FAQ.pdf?la=en

⁵ Meningococcal Disease Serogroups by Year of Onset, Ohio, 2012-2016

<http://www.odh.ohio.gov/-/media/ODH/ASSETS/Files/bidstats/2016/16Meningo.pdf?la=en>

⁶ CDC Pinkbook, Meningococcal Disease. <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pubs/pinkbook/mening.html>

⁷ <http://codes.ohio.gov/orc/3313.67>

⁸ I.07 Rights of conscience; education; the necessity of religion and knowledge (1851)

<https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/laws/ohio-constitution/section?const=1.21>

⁹ I.21 Preservation of the freedom to choose health care and health care coverage

<https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/laws/ohio-constitution/section?const=1.07>

medical professionals I entrusted to care for my children and who subsequently fired us as clients for declining further vaccination. Therefore, it is offensive to me that the State would consider directing me to these very same people to sign my non-medical exemption to vaccination.

Essentially...

This bill is a big government intrusion on our religious freedom, constitutional, and parental rights. It is being pushed by an industry that stands to profit from this proposal and who brought us the opioid crisis. I am asking for you to oppose this legislation and protect the rights of a minority of people who choose non-medical exemptions to vaccination.