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**Health Commissioner-Hamilton County Public Health**  
**Proponent Testimony for House Bill 210**  
**June 18, 2019**  
**House Health Committee**

Chairman Merrin, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Member Boyd, and members of the House Health Committee: Thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony for House Bill 210.

Tuberculosis (TB)\* is one of the world's deadliest diseases:

- One fourth of the world's population, is infected with TB.
- In 2017, 10.0 million people around the world became sick with TB disease. There were 1.3 million TB-related deaths worldwide.
- TB is a leading killer of people who are HIV infected.

A total of 9,105 TB cases (a rate of 2.8 cases per 100,000 persons) were reported in the United States in 2017. In Hamilton County, ten infectious cases have occurred so far this year, two of them are drug resistant cases in residents who immigrated to the United States from an area of the world where TB is prevalent. As a matter of fact, seven out of ten cases of TB in this country occur among non-U.S. born persons. Each active or infectious case of TB requires weeks of follow-up and multiple skin tests of individuals in close contact with the active case.

Furthermore, drug resistant cases of TB are complex and costly cases to track, test, and treat.

The genesis for HB 210 resulted from an employee with infectious TB working in child care facility in Hamilton County. Multiple children, ages 1 to 11, were potentially exposed to TB as a result of the person working there while infected with TB.

Hamilton County Public Health (HCPH) moved quickly to begin the testing of these children and their family members to determine the extent of exposure. When the child care owner/operator was not cooperative in providing the addresses of the families of children and HCPH staff knowing many of these children were on public assistance, we turned to the Ohio Department of Health and Ohio Job and Family Services (JFS) for help in locating the families in order to test them for TB.

We learned from Ohio JFS that these records were protected by Ohio law and their addresses and other contact information could not be released to the local health department, nor to the Ohio Department of Health. This created a huge barrier to our disease investigation efforts and prevented us from testing several family members as we could not locate them in a timely manner. HB 210 removes this barrier by allowing local health departments or the ODH to receive this information from Ohio JFS when a disease investigation has been initiated.

Also, as a result of this investigation, the staff and I learned that there are no requirements under Ohio law that mandates an employee of a preschool or child care facility to be tested for TB.

HB 210 will change this by requiring an individual to be tested for TB prior to being employed as long as the following condition applies:

1. The person had emigrated from a country within the last five years known to have a high burden of TB (as identified by the World Health Organization).

If the person tests positive for TB, they will be further evaluated to determine if they are contagious to others. If contagious or infectious to others, the person will undergo treatment. If they are not found to be contagious, the person can be employed by the preschool or child care facility but will be tested for TB each year for five years.

HB 210 will protect our children from a disease that many believe in this country no longer exists, but clearly does. And given the world economy we live in and the many children in preschools and child care, we must remain vigilant to assure TB does not make a comeback in this country.

HB 210 is a practical and prudent legislative proposal that only requires TB testing of those individuals that are of high risk of spreading the disease among children due to their previous place of residence. This is prevention and prevention always pay off in the end. After all, to use the words of Benjamin Franklin, *an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure*. In this instance, a \$35 dollar skin test could save thousands of dollars down the road, but most importantly protect Ohio's children from this age old, deadly disease.

I urge you to pass HB 210.

Thank you again, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to testify on House Bill 210. I would be happy to answer any questions that members of the Committee may have.

**\*Footnote:** Tuberculosis (TB) is caused by a bacterium called *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*. The bacteria usually attack the lungs, but TB bacteria can attack any part of the body such as the kidney, spine, and brain. Not everyone infected with TB bacteria becomes sick. As a result, two TB-related conditions exist: latent TB infection (LTBI) and TB disease. If not treated properly, TB disease can be fatal.