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Proponent Testimony for Amended House Bill 210
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Senate Health, Human Services, and Medicaid Committee

Chairman Burke, Vice Chair Huffman, and Members of the Senate Health, Human Services, and Medicaid Committee: Thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony for Amended House Bill 210.

First, some background facts about Tuberculosis.

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 and worldwide, a top 10 leading cause of death.

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, 18 infectious cases occurred in 2019, 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 by the local health department and their staff conducts multiple skin tests of individuals that came in close contact with the active Tb case.

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

The genesis for Amended 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 the 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. Amended 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.

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

1. The person had emigrated from a country within the last five years to the United States, known to have a high burden of TB (as identified by the World Health Organization). For example, countries like the Philippines, India, Southeast Asia, Northern/Southern Africa, to name a few.

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 and cannot be employed until they are determined to be medically free of Tb by a licensed physician.

If they are not found to be contagious, the person can be employed by the preschool or child care facility with no further Tb testing.

Amended HB 210 also provides for the treatment of latent Tb (a non- contagious type) as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and this person can be employed by the pre-school or child care facility while being treated for latent Tb.

Given the global health economy we live in today where a disease outbreak in one country (ie coronavirus) can quickly impact the health of the citizens in many other countries, Amended HB 210 makes more sense than ever. Your passage of Amended HB210 will protect our children from a disease that many believe in the United States no longer exists. We must remain vigilant to assure TB does not make a comeback in this country as it continues to plague other world countries.

Amended 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 \$40 dollar skin test could save thousands of dollars down the road, but most importantly protect Ohio's children from this age old, deadly, global disease.

I urge you to pass Amended HB 210.

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

***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.