

R. Joseph Ebel  
235 Trail Court  
Newark, OH 43055

October 5, 2021

House Labor and Commerce Committee  
Representative Dick Stein  
77 South High Street  
12th Floor  
Columbus, OH 43215

RE: HB 435

Dear Chairman Stein,

I am writing to express my opposition to HB 435.

As a local health commissioner, with over 30 years of public health experience, including managing both the current COVID-19 pandemic and the H1N1 pandemic, I have concerns with both the content and the timing of this bill.

We are at a tipping point of the current pandemic. With the current surge of cases due to the Delta variant and Ohio's low vaccination rate, the recent formal FDA approval of the Pfizer vaccine, including booster doses, and the pending approval of the vaccine for lower age groups, we are at a point where we can finally move Ohio past the pandemic for good.

During this critical time where hospitals are overflowing with COVID patients, the General Assembly should be working with employers, educators, health care providers, and the general public to find ways to encourage vaccination rather than facilitating further delays in reaching herd immunity. By legislating restrictions on vaccine mandates and codifying an opt-out by simply stating a reason of conscience, with no justification required, this bill would gut any vaccine mandate by employers.

Employers should be able to do what is best for the health and safety their employees and customers, including requiring vaccinations to protect their workforce, reduce the impact of disease on their ability to provide goods and services, and to protect vulnerable customers and clients.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "R. Joseph Ebel" followed by the text "RS, MS, MBA" in a smaller, printed font.

R. Joseph Ebel RS, MS, MBA