



Chairman Stein, Vice Chair Johnson, and Ranking Member Hagan,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB-435. My name is Andrew F. Beck, MD, MPH, FAAP. I am a practicing primary care and hospitalist pediatrician at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center. I stand in vigorous opposition to HB-435, a proposed bill that itself stands in opposition to the health and well-being of Ohioans. I would suggest that this bill is in conflict with evidence, public health guidance, and the needs of our state. There are few times when bills come up for debate which have the real possibility of setting us, our communities, and our children back in the ways HB-435 is poised to do.

I have devoted my professional life to caring for children in the clinical setting and working to pursue better outcomes for children and their families across communities. I have cared for many children not-yet-eligible for vaccination dealing with either acute COVID-19 or Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children (MIS-C) following a previous infection with SARS-CoV-2. To date, approximately 70% of the patients that have been hospitalized at Cincinnati Children's have been under 12 years and are not eligible for the vaccine. Their health depended, and continues to depend, on the choices of those around them. We have a responsibility to protect such children. Over the years, I have happily received vaccinations to protect myself, yes, but also to protect those like these children that are not able to be vaccinated. I am proud to work at an institution so committed to the patients and communities we serve, and I applaud decisions by institutions like mine to require staff to be vaccinated against diseases like COVID-19 and influenza. I similarly applaud schools and other critical institutions that require vaccines so as to promote the well-being of those that enter their doors. Evidence-backed vaccine requirements are the right decisions for our patients and for our community. Current COVID-19 vaccine requirements ensure that we do our part, collectively, to stem the tide of this pandemic.

In this current era, I feel it important to remember that it is COVID-19 that eliminates our personal freedoms, not vaccination requirements. This pandemic will not magically disappear; it will only fade with a concerted effort pursued collaboratively. Vaccine requirements and other public health prevention strategies represent some of the safest, most effective ways to keep children and communities healthy, to promote a "common welfare" that is highlighted in the preamble to the Ohio Constitution. With the Delta variant firmly present in our state, and with other variants potentially on the horizon, there is a tremendous urgency for us to enact approaches that are rooted in evidence and that work. HB-435 is not that approach. Much as seatbelt laws changed the dynamic and reduced morbidity and mortality relating to car accidents, so too do vaccine requirements provide a far better, collective way for us to turn the tide toward the life, liberty, happiness, and safety we all seek.

Thank you for the opportunity to voice my opposition to this bill.

Sincerely,

Andrew F. Beck, MD, MPH, FAAP