



Sub. H.B. 435
Opponent Testimony
Ohio House Commerce and Labor
October 6, 2021

Chairman Stein, Vice-Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Lepore-Hagan and members of the House Commerce and Labor Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of the Ohio Hospital Association and Ohio Children's Hospital Association in opposition to Sub. H.B. 435, which infringes upon an employers' rights to implement vaccine policies.

This bill limits employers, including hospitals, from implementing policies that effectively protect patients, employees, and communities from the known and substantial risks of COVID-19. Additionally, this bill does not address the concerns expressed by the medical, business and university communities about prior proposals of a similar nature.

Caregivers at Ohio's hospitals have been on the front lines of the pandemic since the very beginning and throughout the current surge that has led to a rapid increase in COVID-19 patients. In fact, many hospitals in Ohio are experiencing more COVID-19 patients in their hospital and intensive care units than they have seen at any point in the pandemic, including this past December's peak.

Ohio hospitals continue to do the best they can in responding to the many challenges and consequences of the COVID-19 crisis, and Sub. H.B. 435 interferes with their ability to ensure the safety and well-being of those who enter their facilities.

Some data helps to illustrate the nature and extent of our current problem:

- In mid-July, Ohio hospitals were treating 200 COVID-19 inpatients. Today that number is 3,507.
- In mid-July, 1 out of 100 hospital patients was being treated for COVID-19. In September 2021, that ratio reached 1 patient out of 6.
- In mid-July, 2% of patients being treated in the ICU were COVID-19 patients. In September 2021, 25% of patients being treated in the ICU were COVID-19 patients and 40% of patients on a ventilator were being treated for COVID-19.
- In children's hospitals, COVID-19 census in September 2021 was more than double the previous winter surge, at a time when they are battling an unusual surge in Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV), which can be very serious in children and also require ICU care.
- The September 2021 census of COVID-19 patients in children's hospital ICUs is more than triple the winter surge.

Ohio's hospitals and health systems are committed to protecting the health and well-being of health care personnel and the patients and communities that they serve. The best available scientific evidence indicates that:

- COVID-19 vaccinations are safe.
- COVID-19 vaccinations are effective at reducing both the risk of becoming infected and spreading the infection to others.
- COVID-19 has a significant risk of transmission both before the onset of symptoms and in the absence of symptoms. These risks are substantially higher among unvaccinated individuals.

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Given the severity and spread of COVID-19 across Ohio, it is imperative that employers, including hospitals, have the right to implement workplace policies they believe are in the best interest of their patients, employees, and communities.

OHA, OCHA and our member hospitals look forward to continuing to work together to put this pandemic behind us as soon as possible.