

To: Members of the Ohio House Commerce and Labor Committee

Fr: Monica Hueckel, Senior Director of Government Relations, Ohio State Medical Association

Da: October 7, 2021

Re: HB 435

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On behalf of the Ohio State Medical Association (OSMA), the state's oldest and largest professional organization representing Ohio physicians, medical residents, and medical students, I am writing today in opposition to House Bill 435. Our physician members remain deeply concerned that rather than help us to overcome the threat posed by COVID-19 to our state, this legislation will further endanger many Ohioans' lives and cause severe disruption to our health, economy, and way of life.

Employers are required to provide a safe workplace for their staff based on guidelines from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). Businesses have a responsibility to assess risk of disease exposure and develop a plan to protect their clientele and staff from health and safety hazards. By broadening exemptions for vaccination requirements, HB 435 would effectively take away the rights of most Ohio business owners and operators to determine standards in order to prevent employees from posing direct safety threats to each other and other individuals in the workplace.

It is critical that employers, including hospitals and medical facilities, are able to consider the unique circumstances of their business operations and implement health and safety precautions they deem most appropriate to carry out their services and protect the well-being of all involved. Not only do healthcare facilities need to protect their staff from infectious disease, but they also have a responsibility to protect the patients in their care, including vulnerable patients that would be at serious risk of harm through exposure to unvaccinated individuals that may unknowingly spread disease through contact and proximity.

OSMA is extremely concerned about the impact of legislation that would discourage vaccination rates in Ohio. It is particularly troubling as the Delta variant continues to spread in our communities and the workforces in our hospitals feel strained by the surge in COVID-19 cases over the past several months.

We urge you to avoid undermining pandemic recovery efforts by rejecting HB 435. Thank you for your consideration of our comments, and please feel free to reach out to us with any questions.