



**Ohio House of Representatives
Commerce and Labor Committee
Testimony in Opposition to House Bill 435
October 7, 2021**

Chairman Stein, Vice Chairman Johnson, Ranking Member Lepore-Hagan, and members of the Ohio House of Representatives Commerce and Labor Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition to House Bill 435 on behalf of the Greater Dayton Area Hospital Association (GDAHA). My name is Sarah Hackenbracht and I am the President & CEO of GDAHA, a regional hospital association, which serves 29 hospitals and health systems in Auglaize, Butler, Champaign, Clark, Darke, Greene, Miami, Montgomery, Preble, Shelby, and Warren Counties. In addition to advocating on behalf of our member hospitals, we provide a forum to collaborate and develop regional solutions for community health initiatives, emergency response and preparedness, health information technology, and quality of care projects.

Early in 2020 and in response to COVID-19, GDAHA formed our COVID-19 Taskforce and guided all regional action through a multidisciplinary process to ensure we equipped leadership with the necessary information to make decisions for their institutions and the region. Throughout our response to COVID-19, the Dayton region's hospitals prioritized the health and safety of their patients and loved ones along with the health and safety of the nearly 40,000 individuals employed by our region's hospitals and health systems.

In concert with the Ohio Vaccine Coalition, we echo their statement from our statewide letter that includes healthcare and business organizations across Ohio:

“Unfortunately, the provisions of House Bill 435 fall short of what our state needs as we work toward pandemic recovery, and this bill does not address the concerns expressed by the medical, business and university communities about prior proposals of a similar nature. Protection of an employer's rights to make decisions in the best interest of their employees and those we serve cannot be overstated.”

As we continue to manage the care for residents of the Dayton region in the era of COVID-19, our region's hospitals are dealing with a highly transmissible virus for which we still do not have a cure. Hospitalizations due to COVID-19 remain unacceptably high as we prepare for a very active flu season that will stretch from October 2021 through March 2022.

However, there is a path forward and we do have a vaccine for COVID-19 that is safe and effective. Implementing policies and safety measures within hospitals and healthcare organizations to require vaccination is an action that must be determined by the employer. Our hospital leaders make clinical and operational decisions that ensure the safety of all team members and guarantee that our hospitals can serve the community's needs accordingly. Vaccinating our workforce protects them from COVID-19. Additionally, our hospitals are among the largest employers in the Dayton region. Our vaccination efforts also help our hospitals and

healthcare facilities lead the way in our communities as we work collaboratively to end this pandemic and get back to business in a vibrant local economy.

Requiring employees to be vaccinated in accordance with the Centers for Disease Control's (CDC) recommended vaccines for healthcare workers is a baseline safety measure for hospitals across in the Dayton region. Following the CDC's guidance ensures that our hospital employees and staff are protected from highly transmissible diseases that are preventable with a vaccine. Each hospital maintains a vaccine exemption process for employees who request an exemption for medical or religious reasons. When appropriate, our hospitals also allow the presence of blood titers to meet the standard of the vaccine requirement. Blood titers occur in the blood after someone has had an active infection of a virus.

In addition to protecting our employees and staff from contracting highly transmissible diseases, our hospitals have an obligation to ensure their facilities are safeguarded against the viruses like COVID-19, the seasonal flu, measles, chicken pox, and whooping cough for the safety of our patients and their loved ones. Our hospitals must ensure that people seeking care at any of our region's hospitals do not develop further complications by contracting a highly transmissible virus that we can prevent.

Respectfully, GDAHA and its member hospitals ask that you consider the implications of House Bill 435 carefully and urge you not to pass this bill out of committee. Hospitals occupy a unique position in every community across Ohio as employers, partners in the local and state economy, and the location for care when you or a loved one are in a healthcare crisis. Our hospitals work tirelessly to ensure their facilities are safe, open, and available to provide care 24 hours a day, seven days a week. To do so, we must guarantee the safety and wellbeing of our healthcare workforce while ensuring every location where care is delivered is safe for patients and their loved ones.

Thank you for your time and attention. I am happy answer any questions.



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