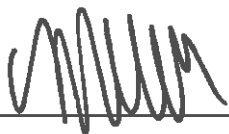


May 20, 2021

Chairman Lipps, Vice Chair Holmes, Ranking Member Russo, and Members of the House Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on House Bill 248.

My name is Yoel Mayerfeld. I am a business owner. The reason I support House Bill 248 is because I was recently coerced into leaving my synagogue during prayer services because I was not wearing a mask. I have been a member of this synagogue and a regular attendee since 2006. The brief background is that On Sunday, May 16, 2021, our synagogue, which is a large congregation, changed its covid policy and sent out an email stating that any vaccinated congregants would no longer have to wear masks, but that unvaccinated congregants would still have to remain masked while in the building. People were upset over this policy because it discriminates against the unvaccinated. Not everyone can tolerate wearing a mask. In addition, it violates privacy rights. Personally, I don't feel comfortable identifying my medical choices with anyone other than my doctor. On Tuesday, May 18, 2021, I went to the synagogue to pray. I walked in with a mask on, but when I saw that very few people were wearing a mask in the sanctuary, I took mine off. A friend who presumed to know my vaccine status, came over to me waving a medical mask under my nose and told me to put it on. I declined and asked him to step away from me, as I was about to begin the sacred Yizkor service, which is said by Jewish people who have lost a parent (in my case, both parents), and which is a particularly emotional service. The person waving the medical mask would not step away. He kept telling me (in front of many other people) to put on the mask. I walked out of the synagogue and this person followed me while I walked to a different synagogue (one without a mask policy) so that I could say the Yizkor prayer for my parents. You might read this and say, well, "all's well that ends well – you found a congregation who is like minded". However, that other congregation is not my congregation. It is not where I pay my membership dues and although it is comprised of my brethren, it is not quite the group of close friends with whom I have been praying and breaking bread for almost two decades. The vaccine issue is becoming divisive. Any divide within our community or within our country, weakens us. If the state of Ohio does not take a stand on this issue to confirm that medical freedom is a right protected under the constitution, then we are headed for disaster.

Sincerely,



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Yoel Mayerfeld