

To: House Health Committee

From: Katherine Strafford, MD

Date: June 15, 2021

RE: HB248 Vaccines

The danger of undermining decades of public health policy with this legislation cannot be ignored. Infectious diseases that for many years struck fear into our hearts are now so rare that some have forgotten their terrible power. The rarity of these infections is due to widespread vaccination protecting the most vulnerable in our communities.

As a child, I recall the fascination and empathy I experienced reading an article on children infected with polio spending weeks in iron lungs. They were the same age then that I was as I read about the fear of death that they and their families faced. I can bring to mind the black and white photos of row upon row of children laying on their backs in a metal tank with a mirror propped up to watch the world.

Now, for over a year I have worked as an obstetrician guiding women through the anxiety of being pregnant in the midst of a pandemic. Passage of this legislation risks outbreaks of infection diseases such as mumps, hepatitis and rubella that are known to be devastating to healthy pregnancy and to reproduction. Help us to guide our patients with information about vaccine safety and importance and utilization of the existing mechanism for immunization exemption. Vote to reject HB 248-11.