



The Honorable Chairman Lipps and Vice Chairman Holmes:

On behalf of the **Greater Cleveland Covid-19 Rapid Response Fund**, we are respectfully submitting the attached letter of **opposition to Substitute H.B. 248.**

The Rapid Response Fund (RRF) is a coalition of Northeast Ohio philanthropic, corporate, and civic organizations with one simple goal: to help protect the communities that we serve from the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The RRF was established in March 2020 to expand the capacity of the government response to the outbreak and address basic needs including childhood well-being, food security, housing stability, workforce development, and public health. To date, the **Fund's partners have granted nearly \$16 million to over 300 nonprofit organizations in Northeast Ohio** and continue to look for areas of unmet need.

We are extremely concerned by the language in Substitute HB 248. This legislation, if passed, will not only expose more Ohioans to COVID-19 morbidity and mortality, but will also create an unnecessarily significant public health risk by opening the door to potentially lethal disease outbreaks. These outbreaks jeopardize the health and safety of our state's economy and local communities. HB 248 has the potential to negatively impact every aspect of the lives of those who call Ohio home.

Broad Legislative Application

While this bill appears to have stemmed from concern about mandatory COVID-19 vaccination policies, the legislation applies to all immunizations. This includes those given to some of Ohio's most vulnerable citizens: our children. For generations, childhood vaccinations have protected our most susceptible from life-threatening diseases, including polio, hepatitis, measles, and mumps.

The broad application of Substitute HB 248 highlights the disregard for modern science, which is rooted in on the same evidence that helped eradicate smallpox—a disease that killed 300 million people worldwide in the 20th century alone. Vaccines have safely and effectively helped millions of people achieve immunity against dangerous diseases and saved innumerable lives. To ignore these facts is to willingly introduce the dangerous consequences and a disruption to the health and safety of Ohioans, especially those in areas of highest need.

Further, Substitute HB 248 would deny the freedom of Ohio employers and organizations to decide for themselves how to ensure the success of their businesses and, thus, protect the jobs of their employees. Job creators of all sizes would be barred by this legislation from requiring any vaccination and implementing self-determined safety measures designed to protect employees, customers, clients, and the broader community. Each business or organization is unique, and their success depends on having the right to decide the most effective approaches for building and maintaining a healthy workplace environment.

Exemptions that Currently Exist Under Law

The need for HB 248 is suspect, as Ohio is already one of 15 states that allows for school immunization exemptions for nonmedical or philosophical reasons. Further, Ohio organizations and businesses that depend on vaccinations to protect their staff and those they serve have consistently shown flexibility when it comes to employee vaccinations.

As Ohio recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic, we urge you to oppose this legislation as it could disrupt efforts to protect the health and well-being of Ohioans, both economically and physically. We appreciate your leadership during this unprecedented time, and we stand ready to assist you and your colleagues with identifying the downstream effects of this pandemic and provide sustainable solutions that will continue Ohio on a path to public health and economic recovery for all.

