

HB 248: To Prohibit Required Vaccination Status
Opponent Testimony: Summit County Board of Health
Ohio House Health Committee
June 15, 2021

The Summit County Board of Health is very concerned about HB 248-11, titled the "Vaccine Choice and Anti-Discrimination Act." The bill's primary sponsor, Rep. Jennifer Gross (R, West Chester) says that the primary purpose of this bill is to protect the rights of those who **refuse to get covid vaccinations. *In fact, the words COVID-19 or coronavirus are not found in this legislation.*** She states, "This is a *matter of freedom...* the purpose of this legislation is to allow people to choose to do what they feel is best for their own body and protect individuals from any consequences or hardships for choosing one way or the other."

Living in an open society **does not mean** we get absolute freedom without any limitations. In Ohio, we have long supported the need to temper our freedom with public responsibility. Does our freedom to drink alcohol allow us to drive a car that could harm or kill others when we are drunk? Of course not. Do we have the freedom to run into a crowded movie theater and scream "Fire!" thereby creating a panic and stampede harming others when there is no fire? Of course not. "Freedom" comes with responsibility to our entire community that includes reasonable limitations. It is the normal behavior we expect of our family, friends, neighbors and community.

This broad legislation applies far beyond COVID-19 to any and all vaccines, including childhood vaccines long used in this county to safely eradicate disease. The bill prohibits any Ohio entity from requiring, maintaining or requesting any vaccine information from anyone or imposing even basic health orders that help protect us all. The bill prohibits employers (including hospitals) from requiring masks in any situation, including isolation. Should unvaccinated individuals be allowed to freely walk a hospital without a mask and be allowed to infect patients? We certainly think this is a bad idea.

For decades we have safely depended upon vaccines to eradicate disease in this country and under this bill these could not be required, by even a school or childcare facility. Polio, measles, diphtheria, pertussis, pneumonia, shingles, etc. have all been successfully addressed in our country through safe and effective vaccines. Schools have long required vaccines to protect all our children from disease.

As the seventeen-member Summit County Public Health Board we have never unanimously opposed the state legislature, but today we join together because we believe that HB 248 is deeply misguided and places the entire fabric of our public health system in jeopardy. **We strongly believe that vaccines have long been very effective in the eradication of lethal disease, and we continue to support and advocate for them, including those combating COVID-19.**