



June 14, 2021

Chairman Lipps  
Vice Chair Holmes  
Ranking Member Russo  
Members of the House Health Committee

**Reference: Testimony on House Bill 248 (HB-248)**

My name is Siobhan Tellez. I am a practicing pediatric nurse practitioner in endocrinology at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center.

I stand in opposition to HB-248, a bill that will threaten the health and well-being of all Ohioans.

When I became a pediatric nurse practitioner, I made a promise to fight for better health outcomes for children and their families of all communities. I am deeply disturbed by the inevitable sequelae of passing HB-248 and it is my duty as a medical provider to voice the reason for my staunch opposition.

I provide clinical care for children and adolescents who have diabetes (type 1, type 2, and post-pancreatectomy to name a few types). Children and young adults who have chronic illnesses are at higher risk for developing short-term and long-term complications from infectious diseases. Vaccines protect these children/adolescents from serious infections such as measles, mumps, whooping cough, meningitis, influenza, COVID-19 and a serious condition called Multi-system Inflammatory Syndrome (MIS-C).

HB-248 undermines years of public health initiatives that protect children and adolescents from diseases that previously resulted in severe complications and death. This particular piece of legislation does not specifically spell out that it applies to recommendations around COVID-19 (vaccines, masking, or otherwise), which means it jeopardizes the public health measures (like vaccines and masking) around many other, potentially devastating, diseases such as influenza, meningitis, tuberculosis, and measles. This bill has the very real potential to destroy our current public health framework that prevents the outbreaks of many other deadly diseases (that are currently well controlled by vaccines) beyond COVID-19.

There are years and countless studies to support the efficacy and benefit of vaccines, and these benefits far outweigh the risks, but let me share this:

I'm writing this letter for all children and adolescents in my care. But in particular, I'm writing this letter on behalf of my patients who have had a total pancreatectomy with islet autotransplantation (TPIAT). After surviving the devastating and debilitating daily pain of chronic pancreatitis, and a massive surgery that took out their pancreas, their spleen, and a chunk of their intestines, these incredible little humans rely on a rigorous vaccination schedule to protect their now immunocompromised system. Right now, they get a chance at living close to a normal life after having their spleen taken out (which is responsible for mounting a fight against infections) because vaccine schedules protect them, and because vaccine schedules have allowed



the majority of their peers to be protected against common diseases of childhood (we call this “herd immunity”). Imagining a world where they fought so hard to live, only to die from infection that we could have prevented by recommending and reinforcing childhood vaccination.

It’s on behalf of my patients with type 1 diabetes, who work so hard to keep their blood glucoses in range despite the 42+ moment-to-moment variables that cause massive fluctuation, despite fact that we can only manage with a high risk medication (insulin) that has the power to kill them if they take too much or too little. Getting sick places them at risk for developing complications from their diabetes that could result in a hospitalization, seizure, coma, or even death. These children deserve the opportunity to be protected against childhood infections that would certainly place them at higher risk for dying than their peers.

In fact, all children deserve all that modern medicine has to offer to protect them from dying from preventable childhood diseases.

I have devoted my professional life to advocating for children and adolescents in the pursuit of equity in our healthcare system. Vaccines are safe and effective, and there are many reasons why passing this bill will have devastating consequences on the public health outcomes of Ohio children and adolescents. It is my duty to raise my voice in opposition of this bill and as such, I genuinely thank you for the opportunity.

Sincerely,

Siobhan E. Tellez, MSN, APRN, CPNP-PC  
Pediatric Nurse Practitioner  
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