

Dear Mr Chairman,

I am writing you today as a rare disease patient advocate, who lives with a Primary Immunodeficiency, and the mother of a ten month old son who may inherit the condition, in opposition to HB 248: Enact Vaccine Choice and Anti-Discrimination Act.

Part of the diagnosis for my condition, Common Variable Immunodeficiency (CVID), involves a vaccine challenge. This means that I and others like me were given a vaccine, usually for pneumonia, and then blood was drawn to measure the response. I have very little response to most vaccines. This means that even if I am fully vaccinated, and I am, I am not protected and rely on herd immunity. For Ohioans living with Primary Immunodeficiencies, or who are otherwise immunocompromised, information about vaccination status, for both routine childhood illness, and COVID-19, is necessary to safely make decisions about how to navigate our day to day lives.

As a rare disease patient, I spend a lot of time in medical facilities and hospitals. I require regular treatments and have multiple doctors appointments a week. If I can not trust that I will be safe in those environments, because mask wearing is not required and the vaccination status of my care providers are unknown, then I will be forced to choose between risking my life in an unsafe treatment environment, or risking my life by forgoing my treatment.

As a mother, I worry that my baby, who is fully vaccinated for his age, will not have protection; either because his immune system may also be compromised, or because herd immunity in Ohio will suffer if this legislation is passed. My son, like all infants, is vulnerable to illnesses that he isn't yet old enough to be vaccinated for, including COVID-19.

I plead with you to put the lives of Ohioans who are most vulnerable above the preferences of those who are privileged with enough good health to believe that their vaccine and mask wearing choices and the disclosure of that information only impacts their own families. Our safety, and the safety of all Ohioans, is hanging in the balance.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Sara E.B. Sharpe
Rare Disease Patient Advocate