



December 9, 2021

Chairman Peterson
General Government Budget Committee
Ohio Senate

RE: Opposition to HB 218

Chairman Peterson, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Craig, and members of the committee:

Thank you for allowing us to testify in opposition to HB 218. Nationwide Children's Hospital strongly supports immunizations and urge that all children be fully vaccinated. We believe this bill threatens the health of Ohio's children and would create a devastating impact on Ohio's children and families.

As pediatric physicians and advocates for public health, we have seen the incredible impact vaccines have on the health of our children, our communities, and our state. The greatest public health success story over the past 100 years has been the widespread use of vaccines, especially in children. In this critical time of the COVID pandemic, we know vaccination is the best protection.

HB 218 is deeply harmful legislation that would dangerously undermine Ohio's ongoing pandemic recovery efforts. The proposed broadening of vaccine exemptions under this legislation effectively takes away the rights of the majority of individuals who have businesses in Ohio to implement important safety measures meant to protect their employees, clients and others from COVID-19. Ohio's businesses, healthcare facilities, schools, and universities must retain their rights to make decisions in the best interest of their employees and those they serve.

Leaving a child unvaccinated not only leaves that child dangerously susceptible to vaccine-preventable illness, but also allows those diseases to infest the community. Unvaccinated children and adults who contract a vaccine-preventable illness may spread the disease for days before they show any symptoms, potentially infecting highly populated areas such as grocery stores, places of worship, daycares, and nursing homes. Wide vaccine exemptions become a far-reaching danger to the entire community in this way.

They will likely need to seek medical care for their symptoms, passing through doctor's offices, ambulances, and emergency departments, all while potentially spreading these diseases. If vaccine exemptions are broad and standard, that danger then spreads to the many children who are unable to be vaccinated and must also seek care. The safe haven of healthcare facilities becomes a risk for children that are unable to be vaccinated (due to young age or autoimmune condition) due to unknown providers or staff being unvaccinated and vulnerable to COVID. The ability to be exempt from vaccination knowingly effects other families in the community.

HB 218 is not an appropriate solution. I urge you to reject this legislation, protect the vitality of Ohio's families, and avoid disastrous consequences for the future of our state.

Thank you for your consideration.

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