



Rep. Scott Wiggam
77th Ohio House District

Chairman Cutrona, Ranking Member Somani, and members of the Health Provider Services Committee, thank you for allowing Representative Gross and I to provide sponsor testimony for the Conscientious Right to Refuse Act.

This legislation will accomplish three goals:

First, HB 319 protects the right of any person 18 and up to decline any biologic, vaccine, pharmaceutical, drug, gene editing technology, or RNA/DNA based product, for reasons of conscience, including religious convictions, AND without being denied: employment, any service, including a public service, access to commerce; or to segregate the individual; penalize the individual or use financial coercion; or to treat the individual differently than individuals who have accepted the medical intervention.

Second, this legislation provides injunctive relief and private right of action to any individual who can prove by a preponderance of evidence that the business employer, facility, public or private entity or college violated the discrimination section of this act.

Lastly, it furthers discourse by clearly stating that no portion of the act shall prevent the recommendation of, education on, or access to any of the medical interventions described in the act.

I would like to also point out that the Conscientious Right to Refuse Act does **not** apply to children because current K-12 law in Ohio already allows for conscientious, religious and medical exemptions under Section 3313.671 (regarding proof of required immunizations and exceptions).

Honoring the religious or conscientious beliefs of a worker or college student and protecting them from discriminatory action does not prohibit an employer or college from educating their workers or students on vaccination, nor does it prevent them from setting recommended public health standards for their employees and students. In fact, for many employers and colleges, it is a benefit to codify because there is an expectation of protecting religious freedoms regarding vaccines and pharmaceuticals. It removes the burden of outside pressure that they must make their workers submit to medical mandates to compare with other business who are setting those types of policies.

As we have watched liberties be stripped from our constituents for over the past few years, we should ensure the protection of their religious freedom and conscience regarding their right to refuse medical interventions. This country was founded on religious freedom and that freedom cannot and should not be violated in the name of “public health” – a term which, in the minds of many people whom I represent, was used as a cudgel to force compliance to political demands. Although Ohio’s legislators did not give Ohioans these protections when they most needed them, we **can now** ensure a pathway to protect them from current and future attacks on their medical and religious liberties.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on this important bill, we would be happy to take any questions at this time.