

Chairman Cutrona, Vice Chair Gross, Ranking Member Somani, and members of the Health Provider Services Committee, thank you for allowing me to provide support testimony for HB 319; “The Conscientious Right to Refuse Act.”

My name is Tina Wise. I am an active Ohio-licensed pharmacist with over 32 years of full-time work experience in a variety of healthcare settings, mostly as a hospital pharmacist within pediatric and adult acute care facilities.

All biological and pharmaceutical products, as well as all medical interventions, come with risk, whether it is considered a minor risk or a major risk. Regardless of the degree of risk, every individual should have the right to informed consent and have the freedom to either take on that risk or decline to take on that risk without duress or coercion or threats of any kind - not from their employer, not from their doctor, not from a college or university and perhaps most importantly not from any government entity.

In addition to any risk-taking, every individual has a unique conscience, and therefore distinctive thoughts and beliefs, that drives the way a person lives out their life. This is so individualized that only the person themselves can determine if a certain biological or pharmaceutical product or a medical intervention is acceptable to their conscience or religious beliefs. No outside entity should infringe upon this and coerce or force a person to act contrary to their conscience or religious beliefs.

Unfortunately, Ohioans and citizens across our country have continually been denied this right to informed consent and have been subject to discrimination for their conscientious and religious beliefs. I myself was denied an Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) religious accommodation to my former employer’s COVID-19 policy – despite being amongst a minority with religious beliefs, despite having a spotless 23-year record of employment and despite having virtually no patient contact. Not only was this devastating to me personally and professionally, but it continues to impact my family financially and emotionally. I am not alone in this struggle to maintain the right to informed consent and religious freedom. There are countless others who have experienced the same thing, and this needs to stop. Please take action and pass this bill.

I urge committee members to please vote yes on HB319.