



**Representative Melanie Miller**  
**Ohio House District 67**

**Representative Monica Robb Blasdel**  
**Ohio House District 79**

**House Health Committee**  
**House Bill 561 – Sponsor Testimony**  
**Wednesday, February 4<sup>th</sup>, 2026**

Chair Schmidt, Vice-Chair Deeter, Ranking Member Somani and members of the House Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present sponsor testimony for House Bill 561, also known as the Parental Clarity on Health Options and Information on Conscientious Exemptions Act or the Parental C.H.O.I.C.E Act for short.

This legislation aims to ensure parents are fully informed of their existing rights under Ohio law to claim vaccine exemptions for children to attend licensed daycares, pre-schools, and K-12 public and nonpublic chartered schools.

Under current Ohio law, there are conscientious, religious, and medical vaccine exemptions that have existed in Ohio law for decades. However, parents are not always informed that these exemptions exist, and they may receive inconsistent guidance depending on the school or childcare provider. I have heard directly from families in my district—particularly parents of children entering kindergarten—who were told by their school that certain vaccines were mandatory for enrollment. Uncomfortable with that message and uncertain of their options, these parents reached out to my office for guidance. Once informed of their existing rights under Ohio law, we were able to assist them through the exemption process, easing unnecessary stress and confusion.

The Parental C.H.O.I.C.E. Act will allow families to be informed and empowered to make choices that best fit their values and circumstances. This legislation would:

- Limit overreach in exemption requests by prohibiting schools from requiring additional documentation or forcing parents to use a specific exemption form.
- Improve transparency by requiring schools to clearly inform parents of exemption rights and cite the relevant law in all communications about vaccine requirements.
- Remove hepatitis B vaccine requirements for preschoolers, which aligns with current CDC recommendations that the decision to vaccinate for hepatitis B should be based on shared decision making between parents and their physician.
- Establish a process by which parents may report violations to the Department of Youth.

- Keep schools accountable for noncompliance, including potential suspension of their charter or license.
- Protect schools from potential lawsuits from parents if a vaccine injury takes place.
- Prohibit schools from excluding healthy, uninfected children from attendance solely based on their vaccination status during disease outbreaks if they have a lawful exemption.

Together, these provisions reflect our commitment to clarity, fairness, and respect for parental decision making. I would now like to invite Representative Robb Blasdel to further explain the importance of this legislation.

Thank you, Representative Miller. Chair Schmidt and members of the committee,

House Bill 561 is a transparency and clarity bill, and it does not create new exemptions. Instead, it ensures that parents, schools, and childcare providers all have a clear understanding of what current Ohio law already requires—and just as importantly, what it does not require.

Over the past year, concerns have been brought to my attention by families in my district regarding confusion surrounding immunization exemptions. In many cases, the issue has not been disagreement with the law itself, but uncertainty about how the law should be implemented at the local level.

This lack of transparency creates confusion for families and administrators alike and can undermine trust in the public health system. This legislation will additionally create a reporting and enforcement pathway to ensure that schools are in compliance with the law.

Transparency is a cornerstone of effective public health policy. When families understand the law, compliance improves, conflict decreases, and trust is strengthened between parents, providers, and the state.

House Bill 561 does not discourage vaccination; rather, it promotes informed decision-making by ensuring families have access to complete and accurate information.

In short, the Parental C.H.O.I.C.E. Act ensures that Ohio's immunization laws are applied as written—consistently, transparently, and fairly.

On behalf of Representative Miller and myself, we ask that you give favorable consideration to House Bill 561, the Parental C.H.O.I.C.E Act. Thank you, Chair Schmidt and members of the Health Committee for the opportunity to present sponsor testimony.

We will do our best to answer any questions you may have.