

Subject: Proponent Testimony for HB 561

Chairperson Schmidt, Vice Chair Deeter, Ranking Member Somani, and members of the House Health Committee,

My name is Stacey Kopec, and I am a parent from Northfield, Ohio. I am writing to express my support for House Bill 561. As a parent, I believe it is critical that schools and daycare providers communicate honestly with families regarding vaccination requirements and exemptions under Ohio law.

I am here today to share with you my experience with the Administration in my local school district. In June of 2016, my husband and I decided to withdraw our 3 children from private school and enroll them into our local public schools. I went to the Nordonia Hills School District's Board of Education and asked the secretary for all the forms I needed to enroll my kids in school, and their vaccine exemption form for our current 3 school-age kids. I was told by the secretary that Nordonia does not allow exemptions for vaccines. I then said that I am sure they do, and to please give me the forms. She told me again that they do not accept exemptions. When I told her that this is Ohio, not California, and Ohio does allow exemptions, she then opened the bottom left drawer of the desk she was sitting at and pulled out the form, handed it to me, and said: "Ok, but if there is an outbreak, we will ask you to keep your kids home". I took the papers and left. I couldn't believe that the secretary of the school I was going to be sending my kids to lied to me, but that is what happened.

In 2014, when my sister went to enroll her son in preschool, she was told the same thing by the nurse. Unlike myself, my sister thought she had no choice but to vaccinate her son, so she took him to his pediatrician and got him "caught up" on his shots. After my nephew was in school for a couple of years, they realized he had a hard time focusing on school and continued to struggle throughout school. While he will graduate from High School this year, he will not be going to college because school has been so difficult for him. Her son showed no signs of learning disabilities before his "catch-up" vaccines, and she will never know if they contributed to his learning disabilities, but she suspects they did.

The fact that there are schools knowingly coercing patients into taking a medical procedure that has a risk of injury and death is criminal. The number of parents that I have spoken with over the past 16 years who have told me that they had no choice but to get their kids vaccinated so they could go to school is unbelievable. Moms like my sister and so many of my friends simply can't believe that any school administrator or nurse would lie to them.

The financial strain that vaccine-injured children place on families and the state, pales in comparison to the loss of quality of life that the vaccine-injured child themselves must suffer. Where there is risk, there must be choice, and parents need to know they have a choice!!

I am grateful to have 4 healthy children. My kids have no autoimmune or neurological problems, learning disabilities, or allergies. My family is the exception. I know very few other families, except for my friends who also don't vaccinate their kids, who can say the same. I am grateful for the fact that I had a mom of a vaccine-injured child inform me about vaccine exemptions for school, because I did not know before talking with her that I did not need to risk my children's health for them to go to school. The fact is that most parents don't know they have an option.

I hope I have helped you understand today why the only morally responsible thing to do is to finally ensure that the state law is made known to parents, and that exemptions are always honored. No child should be suffering vaccine injury because a school was untruthful about the law. I strongly urge the committee to vote. Yes, on HB 561.

Respectfully,

Stacey Kopec
Northfield, Ohio