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House Bill 561 Written Opponent Testimony
House Health Committee
Greg Kesterman, President-Elect, Association of Ohio Health Commissioners
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Chair Schmidt, Vice Chair Deeter, Ranking Member Somani, and members of the House Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition to House Bill 561. My name is Greg Kesterman, and I serve as Health Commissioner for Hamilton County Public Health and as President-Elect of the Association of Ohio Health Commissioners.

Un- or under-immunized students are at increased risk for acquiring vaccine preventable diseases and pose a risk for transmitting infection to susceptible persons in the community. We see this in the recent measles outbreaks.

Measles cases continue to rise across the United States, with more than 2,100 confirmed cases and 49 outbreaks reported in 2025. As of March 19, 2026, 1,487 confirmed measles cases were reported this year, including several communities in Ohio. Of those confirmed cases, the majority are among children and adolescents. ([CDC, 2026](#)). Unvaccinated individuals or those with unknown vaccination status represent almost all reported measles cases. (<https://publichealth.jhu.edu/ivac/resources/us-measles-tracker>)

Declines in childhood vaccination coverage continue to increase the risk of outbreaks. [According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#), vaccination coverage among U.S. kindergartners decreased from 95.2% during the 2019-2020 school year to 92.7% in the 2023-2024 school year.

The ability to temporarily exclude unvaccinated students during an outbreak is a long-standing, practical public health measure used to slow transmission, protect medically vulnerable children, and keep outbreaks small and manageable. Without that authority, schools and local health departments have fewer options to respond quickly, increasing the risk of wider spread and disruption for students, families, and communities.

When a case of a vaccine-preventable disease is identified, time matters. Public health works closely with schools to identify who is protected, who may have been exposed, and what steps are needed to prevent additional illness. Temporary exclusion of unvaccinated students is often

the clearest and most effective way to limit further transmission while protecting children who cannot be vaccinated because of age or medical condition.

Vaccines remain one of the greatest public health achievements in history because they protect individual children from serious illness while also serving a broader public health purpose by reducing disease spread and helping safeguard the health of the entire community.

On behalf of AOHC, I respectfully urge you to oppose HB 561.