

Opponent Testimony Regarding House Bill 561

Delivered to the Ohio House of Representatives Health Committee
Testimony offered by Zach Rossfeld, MD, MA
March 18, 2026

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

My name is Zach Rossfeld and I am writing in opposition to House Bill 561. I am board-certified in pediatrics and present this testimony in my personal capacity.

Sponsors of HB 561 have chosen an interesting title for this legislation: the C.H.O.I.C.E. Act. After all, choice is a great thing. The only choice, however, that this bill makes is to put Ohio's children at greater risk of preventable disease.

Vaccines are safe, effective, and save lives – and Ohioans know it. 87% of Ohioans say it is important that parents vaccinate their kids. Vaccination is not a fringe position – it is a requirement for attending daycare and school. And yet parents in Ohio, unlike most states, have the right to conscientiously exempt their children from immunization requirements. A written statement citing conscience or religious conviction is all that is required.

Vaccination is the default because it protects children and such a default needs to be protected, not dismantled. Please beware that HB 561 requires Ohio's schools and childcare centers to actively promote opting out. Schools and childcare providers would become instruments of anti-vaccination messaging and not by choice, but by state mandate.

Alongside its notification mandates, HB 561 removes Hepatitis B from the list of required immunizations for Ohio childcare settings. There is no public health rationale for this removal.

This committee should not be misled by the bill's framing. Parental choice in Ohio is already protected. What is not protected — what this bill actively undermines — is the health of children who have no voice and no choice in whether the community around them is vaccinated. HB 561 offers a name that sounds like empowerment. What it delivers is increased risk of preventable disease.

I urge this Committee's opposition to House Bill 561.

Sincerely,



Zach Rossfeld, MD, MA