

The Health Committee
Ohio House of Representatives
Columbus, OH 43215

March 24, 2026

I am writing in opposition of HB 561. Provisions of this bill would prevent schools from responding responsibly and in the best interest of students and communities in the event of an outbreak of vaccine preventable illness. As a school board member and neonatal nurse practitioner, I have both experience and education in this area and a vested interest in legislation that affects both the education and health care of students.

Our district experienced a measles outbreak last fall. Due to the policies and procedures implemented, we were able to maintain operations for 96% of our school population and limit the amount of school missed by all students. This bill would limit the options districts have in responding to outbreaks and would likely result in more students missing school. This bill will also increase the number of students exposed to illnesses which are capable of resulting in long-term health consequences, further resulting in increased absence. ODEW has put increased awareness on the importance of attendance as a key factor in student success. Removing the ability of administrators to respond responsibly to outbreaks of vaccine preventable illness will harm students and result in more absence.

The vaccine exemption process is already protected by law and easily accessible for families. Proponents of this bill have stated that this bill is necessary because exemptions have not been honored by schools. This does not indicate the need for additional legislation. If this is occurring, it is a failure to implement and enforce existing legislation that should be addressed in those districts that are not following the current exemption process. An enforcement issue is not a need for broader legislation which will have significant unintended consequences.

Thank you for your consideration,

Jennifer Fuller