

Chairman Oelslager, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Member Skindell and members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in opposition to a proposed amendment surrounding the school entry immunization process, an amendment that clearly has no business being included within our state budget bill, and even more clearly violates the constitutional and religious freedoms of parents, and thus their children, across our great state.

My name is Tina Wise. I have been an active Ohio-licensed pharmacist for 25 years in a variety of pharmacy settings, but for the last 18 years, I have worked full-time as a pediatric hospital pharmacist. In the past, I have given presentations to other healthcare professionals about immunotherapy and childhood vaccinations, and additionally have researched pharmaceutical products and presented drug bioavailability data during a U.S. Public Health Service internship at the Food and Drug Administration many years ago. I am also a wife and a mother of two sons, one of whom suffered an adverse event many years ago following a round of childhood vaccinations, which resulted in a life-long neurological disability.

The Ohio Revised Code is very clear as to what is required of parents to opt out of school-entry vaccinations (ORC 3313.671 and ORC 5104.014), and only if the vaccine exemption is of a medical nature would parents need to provide a statement from a physician. If the exemption is conscientious or religious in nature, as has been in my case personally, the parent has the full backing of the Ohio Constitution (Article 1.07 “Rights of conscience...” and Article 1.21 “Preservation of the freedom to choose health care...”) to opt out and cannot be compelled to participate, directly or indirectly, within any one particular type of healthcare model.

Within my profession, we encounter several parents who do not subscribe to the full CDC-recommended vaccine schedule for their children for a variety of reasons, some of which are conscientious or religious in nature. Unless it is a life-threatening trauma or critical situation, which is not the case when addressing elective medical procedures like vaccinations, all healthcare professionals have an ethical responsibility to respect the diversity of culture and the religious beliefs of each individual, even if they differ from their own.

While it is likely true that a majority of Ohio parents participate within the standard of care, business model, type of healthcare practice, as more and more vaccines are marketed to state legislatures and added to the list of required vaccinations for school entry, parents should maintain the free right to opt out of certain vaccines, or all vaccines, without violation of their constitutional rights by forcing them to arrange and pay for an appointment to be instructed by, and require the signature of, a physician or another healthcare provider. Any proposed amendment that would undermine parental rights in this manner, and is nothing more than a marketing tool for a special interest group, should be withdrawn from consideration immediately.

I am fully capable of reading medical literature and vaccine package inserts and of taking care of my family’s health according to our religious beliefs, and there are plenty of Ohioans like me who can do the same thing and simply want to maintain the freedom to do so.

I respectfully thank you for your time in allowing me to voice my opposition to such an amendment.

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