

Chairman Lipps, Vice Chair Holmes, Ranking Member Russo, and Members of the House Health Committee:

I am testifying in writing as a strong proponent of HB248, the Vaccine Choice and Anti-Discrimination Act. The 2020 Coronavirus Pandemic has shown us how vulnerable our civil liberties are. We are vulnerable to not just overreach by government officials and agencies, but also by the private sector. When vaccine passports were first mentioned last year by individuals, it was a frightening thought, but it was considered a “conspiracy theory” and also written off as “impossible here in America.” I want to make this clear: I do not believe in the vast conspiracy theories circulating, as they lack one crucial piece: real world proof; none exists in real life to give them any credibility. That being said, now we are hearing about the development of vaccine passports. Some states are already working to ban them. But in New York, they are already using them in limited circumstances. It is wrong that they are in mandatory use at all. It would be horrifying if they become a common thing, especially in our country. Florida Governor Ron DeSantis said it perfectly: people have a right to participate in society. We also should not let more of our private information be taken from us. We must not let Ohio go down the road of “show me your papers.” It just smacks of totalitarianism that existed in the past in Communist and Fascist nations.

We also must have our right to choose to receive a vaccination, or not, secured by our government. Vaccination might conflict with a person’s conscientious beliefs, religion, or they might have medical reasons to not receive a vaccine. I am wary of new vaccines. I received the Swine Flu vaccine when it came out during the 2009-2010 Swine Flu Pandemic. Shortly thereafter, within a few weeks, I developed an unspecified seizure disorder that gives me grand mal seizures in my sleep. It is under control with loose dosage medication, but I do not want to risk complicating the disorder further. That being said, I also firmly know it is my right, and everyone else’s, to take or refuse a vaccine without coercion or mandates, and we must protect people from the practice of mandating or coercing people.

I am also noticing a trend. The uses of the terms “vaccinated” and “unvaccinated” are being used more and more. I fear this will stoke further division. We do not need any more division. We do not need to empower people who decline vaccination to be treated like a Typhoid Mary or like a leper. They deserve the same respect courtesy and respect we afford to everyone else.

I demand to see people in Ohio have their rights secured. These rights are, but not limited to, the right to refuse vaccination, including based on medical, conscientious, and religious grounds; the right to be able to work and not be terminated from employment or be excluded from the workplace; the right to participate in society without receiving a vaccine, including going to work, to the movies, to a store, to a restaurant or bar; the right to an education; and being able to receive medical care. We also must secure these rights by banning the mandatory use of vaccine passports. How do we do this? It is simple: ban the government at any level, and ban the private sector, from implementing mandatory vaccination and vaccine passport policies.

I must also state that, while I am not a fan of unnecessary government intrusion, we are at a place currently where government must step in to prevent overreach, including in the private sector. We have seen governors, mayors, and government agencies, as well as the private sector, fail to use their powers and discretion judiciously. We must confine them to only judicious uses of power and discretion. Mandating vaccines and vaccine passports is the opposite of judicious. This might not be a problem yet, but we must take proactive measures to prevent it from becoming a problem.

Lastly, I do not want my private information to be given out. No one has a right to it. My vaccination status is between me and my physician, not the governor, not a mayor, not a county or township government board, and certainly not a business owner or an individual.

I urge each and every one of you to vote yes on HB248 in order to secure the rights of all Ohioans to freely choose vaccination.

I must also add that I would like to see the section of this bill preventing discrimination against anyone not wearing a face covering remain in the bill. Extend this protection to employees. Extend it to everyone. Facial coverings, including even face shields, are acceptable in certain medical settings, in certain jobs around hazardous materials, etc. They are not acceptable in other settings. I demand their mandatory usage by government, or the private sector, be banned. We do not need something else to possibly label someone as “sick” or “unvaccinated.”

Thank you, and please vote YES.

Bryan Amatangelo