

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

Thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on House Bill 248. As you know HB 248 provides for blanket coverage for vaccine exemption rights across the state, from both public and private entities. HB 248 protects the rights of Ohio families to make medical decisions for themselves without threat to their livelihood or access to goods and services. This vital piece of legislation secures YOUR right and the rights of OHIO CITIZENS to decline a vaccine being forced upon them by any government or private entities. The bill wisely also protects us from discriminatory treatment for exempting ourselves for reasons of conscience, religious or medical reasons, or if we already have natural immunity.

I support HB 248 and I believe wholeheartedly that a person has the right to make their own health decisions. As an Optometrist, I strive to give informed consent to any of my patients who need treatment for a medical eye condition, and could never imagine denying a patient care, or access to services, simply because they chose to decline a medication that may have side effects. Just like with any other medical treatment, I can understand why people may decide that the risks of a COVID-19 shot outweigh the benefits. Especially considering that there is an over 99% chance of recovery from COVID-19 for most people, and long-term safety of these vaccines is unknown.

Personally, vaccine injury has affected my family in a profound way. My daughter, at age 5 months, was diagnosed with catastrophic epilepsy following her 4 month vaccinations. She is 14 years old now, and will always completely rely on us for her total care and safety. My mom experienced vaccine injury as well, developing A-fib only days after a pneumonia vaccination. My husband has recovered from anaphylaxis after a shot. For these reasons and many more, I feel that the risk of injury from the COVID-19 vaccine greatly outweighs the benefit for myself and my family. And since, according to the manufacturers of all of the currently available COVID-19 vaccines, there is no evidence that the vaccine can prevent the spread of the virus to others, it seems that, at least for myself, there is no good reason to take that risk.

It is not enough for the state or national government to declare that the COVID-19 vaccine will not be mandated for its citizens. There also needs to be a guarantee that citizens who are unable, or choose not to, undergo this type of medical treatment will not be discriminated against. Each and every Ohioan should be given the right to decide what happens with their own body and their own personal health, and should not be punished for their decision by being excluded from their job, school, or society. This is most especially the case when it comes to undergoing a medical procedure in an otherwise healthy individual.

It is critical to prevent discriminatory actions, including social and financial discrimination, or additional masking or identifying labels against individuals and families like mine. Governor DeWine states that getting the vaccine is "our ticket to freedom," but what this statement implies is, if you choose to not take the risk, or if you are medically unable to be vaccinated, that you will be stripped of your freedoms. Please stand up for Ohioans and their rights, and support HB 248.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on the need for, and the urgency of, House Bill 248

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