

May 21, 2021

TO:

Chairman Lipps, Vice Chair Holmes, Ranking Member Russo, and Members of the House Health Committee. I wanted to send this letter to provide proponent testimony on House Bill 248.

My name is Katie Kintz and I am currently an administrative assistant/supervisor. When I first found out about House Bill 248 it was a great feeling because of the ability for freedom of choice. Not only for myself but for my grandmother who is in a nursing home. Let me begin by saying that I am fully vaccinated with all my immunizations except for the Flu shot and COVID-19. Both my grandmother and I have had COVID-19 as well. In my letter to you all I specifically talk about the COVID-19 vaccine, but this applies to any vaccine. The COVID-19 vaccine has just been current for me. Healthcare workers should not be forced to get a flu shot that sometimes does not even work due to different strains. People are doing research on vaccines and they want the ability to make their own choices. We do not want to be told by a governing body what is right for us.

House Bill 248 is a sigh of relief for many of us and not just because of the COVID-19 vaccine. Individuals who have wanted to not vaccinate their children have been dealing with problems for years. As for the COVID-19 vaccine, I have friends who are in the healthcare field who are refusing this vaccine because simply—we shouldn't be told what to put in our bodies. The healthcare field already has a huge burnout of staff. People want the right to choose as we live in a society that is supposed to be free.

The reason for writing this letter and my biggest reason to ask you to support House Bill 248 is because of my grandmother. I currently am Power of Attorney for her. She is 82 with dementia and has been in a nursing home for around 3 years now, as I am not able to care for her at home. Prior to the pandemic, my family and I visited her 5 days a week. We all would be naïve to think that abuse and neglect does not happen in these homes as we all know it does. I was constantly in the facility checking her skin and making sure she had enough water to drink. I can't tell you how many times she has been without water or we went to the emergency room because she was so dehydrated. As her dementia progressed her ability to tell me when something happened faded and I could only tell something was wrong when I saw her. When the pandemic hit, and the nursing homes were shut down it was the worst thing you could possibly imagine. My 82-year-old grandmother with no "voice" left alone in her rooms for hours on end. As the pandemic progressed, she was declining more, and I was told there was nothing that could be done. I was not allowed to visit her. When the COVID-19 vaccine was issued to this population we agreed as a family we would be declining it. I will add that my grandmother does receive a flu vaccine, pneumonia vaccine etc. so we are not against vaccines. The facility called me 3 times asking

repeatedly if I would vaccinate her. Most of these people in the nursing facilities don't want to be saved by keeping their families shut out. These people want to live every moment they can with their loved ones. My grandma will never come out of a nursing facility. She will never walk again due to broken hips. Her ability to talk is slowly dwindling and just wants her family. Can you imagine looking at your family member and telling them "I am sorry, I can't hug you" knowing they are dying, and each day could be their last? My family and many of others have had to go through this.

By February of 2021 I had not been able to touch or see my grandmother in over 365 days. People in the nursing homes thrive off their families touch and love. After being told I could not have a visit, I eventually told them that Governor DeWine's order was not just for hospice patients like the facility kept telling me. Prior to earning a compassionate care visit, I was emailed multiple times that if I would consider vaccinating her then maybe I could have a visit. As a health committee, I ask that you look at all aspects of the health. In this case, it wasn't about her health anymore it was about a power to vaccinate to "allow" me to visit my loved one. This vaccine has become nothing more than a power to control in my opinion.

Today, I am still not permitted to touch by grandmother because she is not vaccinated. I will not vaccinate her either. As a committee, I ask that you look at my situation which is very similar to others and think about the relief this bill will bring us. I refuse to push a vaccine into my grandmother who will die from a disease that nobody can stop. We deserve the freedom of choice for ourselves and our loved ones. As a citizen of the United States of America, the land of the free, we should be entitled to not have vaccines mandated for ourselves. It should be our choice what we put into our bodies.

The fear for those of us who are unvaccinated (COVID-19 or other vaccines) is that we will be discriminated against based on our status of vaccination. You can see it currently going on around us. Stores are allowing those that have the COVID-19 vaccine to come in without a mask, but those of us that are unvaccinated cannot. How is this fair? We are made to feel as if the choices we are making for ourselves are the "wrong" choice.

In my final thoughts, I hope that you take into consideration that freedom of choice matters. As a health committee, I ask you to allow people to have that freedom of choice. This House Bill will change the lives of many individuals.

Thank you again for taking the time to read this testimony on the need for and urgency of House Bill 248.

Sincerely,



Katie Kintz