

Chairman Lipps, Vice Chair Holmes, Ranking Member Russo and members of the Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in favor of House Bill 248. My name is Tina Wise. I have been an active pharmacist in Ohio for 29 years. During that time, I have given presentations on immunotherapies, including biological response modifiers and vaccinations, to other healthcare personnel, but for the majority of my career, I have worked, and still work, as a full-time pediatric hospital pharmacist.

I have been personally impacted by my employer mandating a vaccine. I had to go so far as to hire legal counsel to keep my job under Title VII of the Federal Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. This arduous process consumed an enormous amount of personal time and financial resources, and it placed a massive strain on my family and personal health. I was subjected to an in-person interview with my employer's attorney and human resources personnel in which they scrutinized my religious beliefs, and under policy time constraints, had to provide a statement from my church's clergy, which violates my rights to conscience and religious freedom under the Ohio Constitution, but currently there is no recourse under Ohio law. I also had to submit documentation of my sons' school vaccine exemptions at the request of my employer, which what does that have to do with my work performance as a pharmacist? And despite having complied with all this and other intrusive requests from my employer, I have to make the same request every year and then sign their letter reviewing the documentation and informing me that I will have to yet again resubmit another request for the following year. This is my 9<sup>th</sup> year now. I ask you, is this freedom?

I know of many others in Ohio who struggle with this over-reaching and intrusive business practice. Some Ohioans comply because they view standing up for their bodily autonomy as just too monumental against those who have more money and status and better attorneys. Some comply because they are threatened with the loss of rightfully-gained financial compensation, including pay raises and retirement plans. Some comply because they have witnessed first-hand how other coworkers get ostracized and then fired for simply wanting to say “no thank you” to a medical procedure. Some comply simply because it's just easier to avoid the bullying and regretfully hand over this personal medical decision to their employer. Among those who have been arm-twisted into it, some have been injured and then struggle with chronic health issues until they can quit or retire. Most disturbingly, some employees have been outright fired, despite having exemptions from their personal physicians or having religious and philosophical objections to certain medical products. I ask you again, is this freedom?

In light of these infringements upon Ohio citizens and the lack of protections under our state's civil rights laws, Ohio needs HB248 to put a stop to these unjust business practices that have been occurring around the state. Historically, these personal decisions had been kept in the hand of the individual, not one's employer, university, government agency or other outside entity, and HB248 will ensure that this personal choice will be protected and rightfully returned to the individual Ohio citizen. Ohio needs HB248 to protect those Ohioans who simply want to opt out of a medical procedure and continue to work in their chosen profession, support their families and live and function freely in society.

As Representative Gross so eloquently stated in her sponsor testimony, HB248 is a freedom bill and that is the main focus of the Vaccine Choice and Anti-Discrimination Act – freedom.

Thank you for your time and attention, and I will gladly try to answer any questions you may have.

Tina Marie Wise, BS, RPh