

May 19, 2021

Chairman Lipps, Vice Chairman Holmes, Ranking Member Russo, and members of the Health Committee:

I am testifying today in favor of HB 248 as an Ohio resident deeply concerned about the possibility of REQUIRING people to take the COVID-19 vaccine, and the possibility of the implementation of the so-called COVID-19 “vaccine passports” here in Ohio.

I have not and will not be getting the COVID-19 vaccine. It is MEDICALLY CONTRAINDICATED for me to do so. In 1993, I developed Guillain-Barre Syndrome after having an ear infection. Guillain-Barre Syndrome (GBS) is an auto-immune disorder in which one’s immune system turns on the body and begins attacking the myelin sheathing of the peripheral nervous system. This can cause temporary or permanent damage to those nerves. The exact cause is unknown, but it usually occurs in people who have experienced an infection in the weeks preceding its onset. In its most severe form, it is a medical emergency, as it can progress very quickly and leave a person completely paralyzed and on total life support. GBS can lead to death or serious lifelong issues. There are treatments for GBS, but there is no cure. I was fortunate, and did recover, but ever since that time, I have been told by my primary care doctor to NEVER get a flu vaccine, as doing so could cause a recurrence of GBS. When the COVID-19 vaccines were given emergency approval, I researched information on whether or not I should get it. I found that Guillain-Barre Syndrome was on the list of possible severe adverse reactions. Having survived GBS once, I do not care to risk this happening to me again. I have discussed this with my primary care doctor, and she is aware that I cannot take this vaccine.

I am also concerned about the possibility of our schools adding the COVID-19 vaccines to the list of REQUIRED vaccines for school attendance, once emergency approval has been given for use in all school-age children. I have young grandchildren, and I am very much opposed to this. I do not understand why Governor Mike DeWine is pushing so hard for this to be given to CHILDREN, since they are in the very lowest risk group. Children don’t get COVID-19, and they don’t SPREAD COVID-19. Children, no matter what their ages, should NOT be encouraged or REQUIRED to get this vaccine until there is LONG-TERM safety data available that will allow their parents to make an INFORMED choice as to whether or not this is something they want their children to take.

Back in 1976, the US government completely shut down the swine flu vaccination program nationwide after just 54 deaths. I was 22 at the time, and I remember this well. I have read that the VAERS database has so far had THOUSANDS of reports of serious adverse reactions and even deaths from people receiving these COVID-19 vaccines, yet we are constantly being

“encouraged” by the media and our government officials to take it. I don’t know about other people, but even if I was medically able to take it, I would refuse, because I don’t want to participate in this worldwide experiment – and that is what this is. We have NEVER before had an mRNA vaccine given approval for use on humans, and the fact that this was rushed out to counter the pandemic means that many normal steps in the approval process were not completed yet. I’m not questioning whether or not it is effective. That may well be true. What I am questioning is whether or not we KNOW that it is SAFE in the LONG TERM – and for that reason, I adamantly oppose any possibility of REQUIRING this for any reason before the LONG TERM safety data is available. Before the COVID-19 vaccines, the earliest any vaccine was given full approval for use was 4 YEARS (for the mumps vaccine). We shouldn’t be rushing to REQUIRE something before being certain that it is safe. Nor should any entity – government at any level, private business, publicly owned corporation, non-profit organization, church, school, college or university, etc. – be allowed to REQUIRE PROOF of a COVID-19 vaccination in order to allow entrance to the facility or participation in events or activities. We don’t require proof of flu vaccines, and thousands die every year from the flu. We leave the choice of whether or not to get a flu vaccine up to each individual and his or her doctors. The same right of choice ought to be the case with the COVID-19 vaccines.

I am seeing that businesses and other organizations across the country are now starting to “require” proof of the COVID-19 vaccine in order to live a normal life – i.e., to work, shop, or participate in events and activities. I have also seen that many colleges and universities are also “requiring” this of their students who will be in on-campus classes. I do not understand how this can possibly be allowed. It will create two groups of people: those who have had the vaccine, and those who for whatever reason, have not taken it, or CANNOT take it. Those who have taken it will be “allowed” to return to normal life, and those who have not taken it will still be forced to live under DISCRIMINATORY “restrictions”, possibly being banned from working, shopping, attending events and activities, or ever-more-even going to school. How can this be LEGAL? I don’t believe that this IS LEGAL, since these vaccines have not received FULL FDA approval yet – so why SHOULD businesses and other organizations be allowed to practice this discrimination?

I don’t want to be forced to choose between taking a vaccine that might KILL me, or not being allowed to work, shop, go to church, sporting events, concerts, etc. As I said, this is DISCRIMINATION. We don’t allow people to discriminate against others on the basis of race, religion, sex or disability, among other things. Why should this be allowed just because people are afraid of a virus, especially a virus with a recovery rate of over 99.8%?

Last, do we really want to allow anyone in this country to demand to see proof of vaccination for a virus? There are good reasons not to allow this, one being that a person’s private medical

information should STAY private. Another reason is that if this would be allowed, it would remind many of life in Nazi Germany, or communist countries. The Jews were set apart by the Nazis, by being forced to wear the Yellow Star on their clothing. They became seen as second-class citizens by other Germans, simply because Adolf Hitler despised them for who and what they were. Under Hitler, as tyranny became ever-more harsh in Germany, the lives of the Jews were more and more severely restricted by the Nazis. Millions of them were later sent to concentration camps, where they DIED. Under the rule of communism, many were (and still are) forced to live under conditions that we Americans would never have tolerated prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. This isn't Nazi Germany. This isn't a communist country – YET. We are supposed to be FREE American citizens, and not subject to the RULE of a tyrannical government. I don't want to ever hear anyone say to me, "Papers please!" and demand to see proof that I had a vaccine, just so I can work, or go shopping, go to church, attend a concert or a sporting event, etc. That is UN-American. That is just plain WRONG. It is DISCRIMINATION and a VIOLATION of my CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS and civil liberties.

Please protect our Constitutional rights, our personal liberties, and our right to make our own medical decisions, by taking a stand against discrimination and voting YES on HB 248!

Thank you,

Lynn Withrow  
Belpre, Ohio