

May 23, 2021

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

My name is Kristin Allen, I am a mother to three wonderful children and thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony regarding Sub House Bill 248.

We can all agree these past fourteen months have been anything but easy for us to understand. In the beginning of the lockdown my children stayed home to finish school remotely and despite having wonderful educators, it was a struggle. My children made it through the school year and by the time the year came to an end, we all began to learn more about the science behind this virus and started to set aside the fear. We collectively took a breath and regrouped.

I have been a substitute teacher in our school district for the past four years and I knew the 20-21 school year would carry with it a lot of unknowns for students, educators and administrators. My older two boys are in middle school and I needed them to have consistency so I made the decision to pull them from public school to homeschool them. My daughter stayed on remote learning as it was more feasible since she was a fourth grader and didn't have the rigorous curriculum yet.

I'm happy to say we enjoyed the year homeschooling and feel extremely thankful that we have the freedom to choose how we educate our children, the options we have available and so many educators in our community who supported the various learning options this year. It was so refreshing. However, now that we look to the next school year, and my children are ready to head back to in person learning, I want to help ensure that their medical freedoms are still protected as well.

Our family has always followed an alternative vaccine schedule. We have always had full support from the children's pediatrician with no judgment and only information, which I have always appreciated and considered. I have a lot of close friends who are medical professionals and even though they know we differ in our opinions on vaccines, we have never looked at those opinions as something that would divide us. The new push for vaccine passports however, would certainly divide Ohioans and create a class system of sorts between those who have chosen to get the covid vaccine and those who have not. My medical choices have never been something that are visible to others. My close friends only know our stance on vaccines because I've shared it with them. However, if vaccine passports become something that is normalized and accepted, people will be able to look at my family and know immediately what our choice was regarding the covid vaccine. We will be judged; we will be excluded and our medical choices will no longer be private and personal. We will in essence have a scarlet letter placed upon us in the form of a mask. How will my children go back to school in this type of environment?

Vaccine passports will open to the door to segregation and discrimination in the workplace, preferential treatment by retailers, employers, business owners and educators. People will be singled out in their day to day lives and possibly lose the ability to get employment or provide a decent living for their families. Sub House Bill 248 does not take away the ability to inform and advise on the part of employers and business owners. It does not take away the ability for my pediatrician and other medical professionals to provide valuable information regarding medical products or procedures. Those freedoms and choices will still be protected. This bill is necessary to ensure my 13-, 12- and 10-year old's will not be discriminated against by their peers and community for something so personal as a medical choice. It is necessary to ensure they can attend school with their friends, learn from their favorite teachers, shop in their favorite stores and travel to their favorite places without being singled out, categorized or restricted. This bill will continue to protect their medical freedom going forward and allow my children – and all adults - the opportunity to live equally as they always have amongst their friends and neighbors. Your support of this bill will ensure the voices of ALL Ohioans are considered and protected. Thank you for allowing me to submit my testimony today.

Kristin Allen