

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.

My name is Jennifer Davis, and I am afraid. I'm not afraid of the SARS-COV-2 virus, but I am afraid of our government's response. I'm afraid of losing more freedom. I'm afraid of social credit systems. And now I am afraid of my husband losing his job.

After a year of working from home, my husband recently received return-to-office protocols. He is unable to wear a mask due to a medically-diagnosed condition. However, he was informed this week that only vaccinated people will be allowed in the building without a mask. Vaccinated employees will have their own conference rooms and spaces, where they can meet unmasked. Unvaccinated employees will not be allowed in those rooms, and they will be required to wear a mask when not at their desks. If the desks are within six feet of each other, then the unvaccinated will be required to wear a mask at all times.

My husband has had an ongoing dialogue with his managers about his situation. One of them has repeatedly brought up the vaccine and pressured him to get it, even after he politely asked her to stop. When did our coworkers and supervisors get medical degrees? Why are they making major medical decisions for us? In my husband's case, after much research and discussion, the risks of the vaccine outweigh the benefit. So, I'm afraid. I'm a stay-at-home mom who has been out of the workforce. Do I need to dust off my resume? If my husband loses his job, can he find another one? If he can't, am I still hireable? Can I make enough to meet our needs?

We are not alone in our fears. A friend recently shared with us the email her family member received (also here in Ohio, and I can provide the screenshot with her name redacted, if needed). It is bullying, plain and simple, and it is shameful that we are allowing businesses to treat their employees this way (text formatting appears as in the email):

"Vaccines are effective in eliminating the risk of death from COVID-19, and the side effects of the vaccine are a lot less problematic than death by COVID. I know that, and you know that. We all need to be vaccinated so we can safely work together. On top of that, **vaccinated people should not be exposed to non-vaccinated people**. As the CEO of [redacted], I want you to know that it is my expectation that every employee in this great Company will get vaccinated as soon as possible. If there is any reason you cannot get the vaccine, please let your HR department know. You still will not be allowed back in the office, but we will do our best to understand your reason. But, one more time: **it is my expectation that you are vaccinated and you will be back with us.**"

As a biologist, I can provide pages of citations and data to challenge the assertions in that email, but that is beside the point. The message being given to many Ohioans is

loud and clear: get vaccinated, or you might lose your job. This is not informed consent; this is bullying. It may seem like a leap, but I can guarantee that unvaccinated people will lose their jobs if HB 248 does not pass.

I know this is true because my family has already faced discrimination and more over the past year, just due to the masking issue. My husband was physically attacked while grocery shopping in Kroger. His dentist, who had no problem with my husband waiting out in their parking lot when cases were really bad, actually canceled his scheduled appointment a few weeks ago. It's patient abandonment. They acknowledged on the phone that they were aware of the exemptions in the mandate, but said that they chose not to honor them. They were afraid of being shut down if he was seen in their office. It wasn't truly about safety; cases were down, and they were about to make his saliva into an aerosol anyway. It was about compliance. And we see that same situation being played out now, with businesses and the vaccine. It isn't about safety. It isn't about protecting people. It's about forcing compliance. And those who don't comply have their civil rights threatened: their right to work, their right to buy food in a store of their choosing, their right to receive needed medical and dental care.

If we already have people being assaulted and denied dental appointments just over masks, how much worse will it get if HB 248 does not pass? How many more people will be denied access to care that they NEED, if they exercise the most basic human right of freedom - the right to choose what is injected into their bodies? How can we allow our society to become a caste system, where our civil rights are tied to our vaccination status?

I beg you, please, keep this bill moving forward as quickly as possible. Show Ohioans that our jobs will be protected, and that our access to basic services will be preserved. So many of us are afraid.

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

Sincerely,

Jennifer Davis