

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 Alisha Duke, and I am a stay at home mom. I am writing today in support of continuing our freedoms and privacy as Americans, as HB248 would effectively shut down the discriminatory practices that businesses and school districts are trying to put into place in Ohio. The decision to be vaccinated against COVID-19 is a personal decision and could have negative medical ramifications for individuals, depending on their health history. Allowing businesses and schools to make decisions based on vaccination status is a specific example of discriminatory practices, which we have worked for years to stop in America. This vaccine is not FDA approved; it is experimental. Even if it became FDA approved, the survival rate for COVID-19 is greater than 99%. There is absolutely no reason that we should be discriminating against individuals when we have over a 99% survival rate and a vaccine available, if chosen. If the vaccine works as stated, then those individuals who have taken the vaccine have no reason to worry about anyone else's choice.

I have two daughters in the public school system. They wore masks for the entire past school year. I have seen notes regarding surrounding districts that have already started to put out guidance for the 2021-2022 school year. Some of this guidance suggests that if you have not received the vaccine, you will have to wear a mask for the duration of the school year. Masks affected my children in negative ways this past school year – emotionally and mentally. This should no longer be a choice that schools are making for parents. We, as parents, are responsible for our children's health and well-being. This bill would help to protect our rights as individuals and parents to choose whether our children not only receive the vaccine, but protect the privacy of that decision and not be discriminated against (by form of masking or other measures). It has never been someone else's decision whether we receive a flu vaccine, nor has there been any repercussion for failing to receive it. With the high survival rate of COVID-19, I expect the same treatment for this situation. I know they are different viruses, but there is no reason they shouldn't be treated with individual choice when we have over a 99% survivability rate and low hospitalization rate. What we do to protect our health and our children's health has always been held in the parent's hands. It's time to give that right back to us as Americans, both young and old.

Unrelated to the school setting, as Americans, we are granted certain freedoms and liberties as a country that cannot be taken away. This bill would prevent further discrimination based on our healthcare decisions. We should be able to walk into a store, go into work, and travel without discrimination. Now that a vaccine is available, we no longer need to have mandates in place over an individual's healthcare decisions. Please remember that the entire point of the vaccine was to get us back to "normal" and help those with dire medical consequences to COVID-19, not to hold it over Americans as a bargaining chip or ultimatum. I appreciate your consideration of this testimony in support of House Bill 248. It is both necessary legislation and of the utmost importance at this time.

Sincerely,
Alisha Duke